The HOURS of the PASSION

AND OTHER POEMS

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THE HOURS OF THE PASSION
AND OTHER POEMS

THE
HOURS OF THE PASSION
AND OTHER POEMS

BY

HARRIET ELEANOR HAMILTON-KING

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THE HOURS OF THE PASSION

EVENING

O MASTER, let me go!
The air is fair and still,
The dews of sunset steep
The flowers upon the hill;
All the wild skies are pale,
All the wide earth lies free;
Let me now wander forth
To dream of love and Thee;
To linger at my will
Along the purple vales:
There will I find a secret flower,
That all its heart exhales:—
Its heart to Thee exhales.
Let me go!

I will not let thee go!
This hour is Mine and thine,
I have made fast the door
Though thou, My prisoner, pine:
The table I prepare,
With thee I come to sup,
Bitter the herbs we share,
And bitter is the cup.
I will not let thee go!

TWILIGHT

O Shepherd, let me go!
Under the evening stars;
Within my breast there swells
Music in lines and bars;
I hear a song that calls,
A song of heaven and Thee,
Its words are echoes blown
From where the winds sweep free;
Oh, let me out one hour,
One hour of liberty,
And I will bring Thee back my song,
And sing my song to Thee;—
My song of heaven and Thee.
Let me go!

I will not let thee go!
Here art thou closely pent;
With thee is My desire
To seal My testament;
With Body and Blood I keep
With thee a solemn tryst;
A Song of songs shall be,
A holy Eucharist.
I will not let thee go!

MIDNIGHT

O Lover, let me go!
This is the hour for sleep;
All tender things of earth
Lie folded soft and deep;

Worn out am I, and spent,
My heavy eyelids close,
Worse is this weariness
Than slave or captive knows;
Let me lie down and sleep,
And dream of things divine,
And in the morning wake and lift
A face refreshed to Thine;—
My face, Beloved, to Thine.
Let me go!

I will not let thee go!
All others are asleep;
The hour is come, when thou
A watch with Me must keep.
What though the fainting heart
Break in unanswered cry;
What though the life-blood start
In drops of agony?
I will not let thee go!

DAWN

O Guardian, let me go!
Early my heart has stirred
My heart wakes ere the dawn,
As in its nest the bird.
I will go forth alone,
No one on me shall look,
Where the low berries hang
Beside the hidden brook.
Between the dark and dawn,
Down meadow paths I flee;

And home will carry through the dew
A basket filled for Thee;—
My gathered fruit for Thee.
Let me go!

I will not let thee go!
A thousand lips disgrace,
A thousand eyes of scorn,
Fasten upon My face;
Their fingers mock and point;—
I need thee, thee alone;
Give Me thine eyes, this hour,
Fixed, fixed, upon My own.
I will not let thee go!

MORNING

O Saviour, let me go!
Who can withstand that cry?
That piercing cry that rings
Where none but foes are nigh;
The moan of scourgèd slave,
The sobs of friendless child,
Oh, let me serve and save
Thy helpless, Thy reviled!
Oh, let me hence in haste,
Thy prisoners to unbind,
Thy famishing and faint to feed,
Thy little ones to find;
Thy lost, thy lambs, to find.
Let me go!

I will not let thee go!
Am I, then, savèd? See!

Pity nor help is none
This hour for Mine or Me.
Mine eyes are blind with blood,
My moan is in thine ear;
Where mangled worms lie low
Thy place is with me here.
I will not let thee go!

DAY

O Sovereign, let me go!
It is the prime of day;
Fresh flowers I go to find,
I know the cool, green way.
Down in Thy garden grows
The Flower of Silence sweet,
Thy garden of the Rose,
Where all the Roses meet.
Thy Roses wait—they know
Their secret—soon to fall;
Their heads bow down to make a crown,
For Thee, the King of all;—
To crown Thee King of all.
Let me go!

I will not let thee go!
Nor loose thine iron bands;
Here am I King, and thou
The victim of My hands.
I wear a crown of thorns,
My raiment drips with red;
And the same crowning sign
I bind upon thy head.
I will not let thee go!

NOON

O Conqueror, let me go!
  It is the breadth of noon;
The hum of busy men
  Is with the bees in tune.
Their wheel of work goes round
  Thy purpose to fulfil,
Let me into the world,
  Therein to do Thy will;
But half the day is left
  My labour to complete,
Then will I bring it home at night,
  And lay it at Thy feet;—
    My service at Thy feet.
      Let me go!

I will not let thee go!
  My hands and feet pierced through
With nails behold! and thine
  Therewith are fastened too;
The world lies fair and wide
  Outspread beneath this Tree,
Yet shall it not divide
  One moment Me from thee.
    I will not let thee go!

AFTERNOON

O Lord, let me not go!
  All other things are past;
In heaven, in earth below,
  I see but Thee at last!

Darkness, and deeps of death,
The sun has gone from space;
Out of the whole abyss
One star remains—Thy Face.
Sinking in unknown seas,
Lost from all hope of land,
I seek a Cross to cling unto,
And only find Thy Hand;—
My soul is in Thy Hand.
Wilt Thou let go?

But all is finished now:—
The hours were long and slow;
Though fast they flew and free
For those I do not know;
But through the night, the day,
Through all the weight of woe,
Thou hast not stirred from Me,
I have not let thee go.
I have not let thee go!

ST. PETER

THOU didst say, 'Come!'—one supreme minute's space—
I know not how I came, but I was there;
Coming to Thee;—I only saw Thy face,
Treading on earth, on water, or on air.

I knew not, were I body or spirit then;
I only felt that I was free, was free;
God's Kingdom opened to the sons of men,
The fetters of the flesh dropped off from me.

I walked upon the waters, and the whole
Enraptured moonlit universe was thrilled
With the same glory of the sovereign soul,
With the same ecstasy of love was filled.

Then all was o'er, and only hand of Thine
Saved me, at point to perish in the sea;
And yet that moment's memory still is mine,
Knowing that what has been again may be.

I was eye-witness of Thy Majesty
Upon the Holy Mount; I heard and saw,
Loosed from the limits of mortality,
Unblinded by the overshadowing awe,

Thy glory excellent; I bore to gaze
On Thy transfigured countenance Divine,
White as the sun, and lived within its blaze;
I cannot call it back, but it was mine.

I heard the Voice, the Voice from out the cloud,
Rolling in thunder, but more tender even
Than Mary's: 'This My Son,' It said aloud,
'This My Belovèd,' yea the Voice from Heaven.

I saw Thee at Thy highest, in the life
Neither of earth nor Heaven, but on that height
Midway, where flesh and spirit have no strife;
With Thee I entered that transcendent light.

Alas! I did not see Thee at Thy lowest!
Was I not one whom Thou to take didst choose
Into the Garden with Thee, and Thou knowest
When Thou hadst need of me I did refuse.

I did not see, I think that none did see,
The face that leaned above me, and that found
Me sleeping, sought for comfort even from me;—
Oh, my lost hour of hours, no time brings round!

No more of that night! In my heart a sword
Is fixed, and hardly I the lifelong pain
Endure, and only on Thy breast, O Lord,
Dare I uncover that deep wound again.

Marvel on marvel, could I count them all!
What should man rise to with such grace immense?
For me remains the memory of my fall,
And nothing great in me but penitence.

I am Thy Peter, he whom Thou didst name;
And on this Rock it was, Thou didst foretell
That Thou wouldst build Thy Church, and that the same
Should stand in strength against the gates of Hell.

Yes, it is Peter, now so old and poor,
Who once with Thee was young in Galilee;
To whom so much Thou gavest:—ever sure
Thy word shall stand, but what shall stand of me?

The servant of Thy servants in distress,—
What of that charge Thou gavest me to keep?
I bring Thee but my fault, my nothingness;
Thy last, Thy least;—how have I fed Thy sheep?

To-day they watch, and weep, and hunger sore,
Thy poor, Thy secret ones, Thy Saints of Rome.
O my belovèd, O my lambs no more!
To-night my orphans of the Catacomb.

Yet now I must not overmuch lament,
For it is Thou hast led me all the way;
Surely Thy poor, Thy agèd penitent,
Shall weep the last of bitter tears to-day.

Not for to-day that upborne path of power;
I have to pass the slow and shuddering way,
That downward sinks from fainting hour to hour,
The way of slaves and prisoners every day.

Humbly they pass, in dread and in despair,
Knowing not Thee, and black their hopeless past:
Yet the Angel of Thy pity standeth there,
And to Thy bosom beareth them at last.

More humbly than Thy lowest in disgrace,
Who have not known Thee, nor have Thee denied,
Unworthy of the malefactors' place,
Hung for a sign to all men at Thy side,

Must I depart, of my own heart reproved;
But oh, my Lord, my Master, pity me!
I have not served Thee yet, I have not loved;
Have I but this day left to give to Thee?

Only one day,—and I have not begun
With all my soul and strength to do Thy will;—
Nothing is suffered yet, and nothing done;
Surely I love Thee? yet my heart stands still.

Yet this last day is mine, and best at last;
Though all my past fallen short, or done amiss,
I cannot fail Thee now, nor flee, held fast,
Made like to Thee in dying, saved like this.

Nay, not like Thee! my thoughts presumptuous ran,
Thou, Virgin-born, most delicate, most fair!
I, Thy old weather-beaten fisherman,
No more Thy anguish than Thy love could share.

And yet Thou callest me, callest by name;
Through opening doors I hear Thee calling fast;
I have forgotten all my old sad shame,
I am coming, coming, Lord, to Thee at last!

I come, I come! though to the lowest place,
Thou wilt not spurn me from Thy feet adored.
What! Hast Thou come to meet me face to face?
Thou knowest that I love Thee, O my Lord!

SIMON THE CYRENIAN

LORD, they compelled me, cruel,—merciless,—
Coming out of the country of my dreams,
Dreams innocent and lovely, primroses
And cottage gardens:—and this tumult seems
Something I understand not: but I find
A Cross bound on me I can not unbind,
Heavy beyond man's strength, and as I go,
Heavier with every step it seems to grow,
And with its weight an unimagined pain
Uncoils itself, an ever-lengthening chain.
O dark distress that I am caught within!
Why has this come to pass? What was my sin?

Thou art a stranger to me,—I Thy name
Have heard methinks, but Thy foot never came
Across my path. I have not heard Thee speak:
A Galilean said they,—and they wreak
Vengeance on Thee,—for what? But I am none
Of Thine, I know Thee not. What have I done,
That I should pass, the scoff and scorn of them
That line the pavements of Jerusalem?
Serving Thee, following Thee, sharing Thy shame,
Bent with Thy burden, branded with Thy name,
While slowly, slowly, through my soul arise
Floods of inexorable agonies
From unknown depths within me, and I drown,
In these dark waters with Thee sinking down.

I had an errand of my own this morn,
Happy and harmless ; but since I have borne
This load disgraceful I can scarce retrieve
The memory of it,—was it years ago,
Or moments, I was free? and I perceive
Already, that this torture will not leave
Me scathless body or soul, and I shall know
No more of peaceful days, nor be made whole
For evermore of this my grievous wrong;
For that the iron hath entered in my soul,
And holds me fastened by my anguish strong,
As though the very nails prepared for Thee
Pierced my own flesh. O thou malignant Tree!
I feel thee that no dead, dry wood thou art,
But the live claws of some great enemy,
That rend and rankle to my inmost heart:
And wherefore then art thou imposed on me?
My life is crushed out from me; in its stead
Fires in my veins, and waters in my head,
A labouring breath that is but one deep groan,
Limbs stretched into a coil of pain alone;
And for the man I was, some one not I,
From whom all hope has vanished utterly,
Who, agonizing, knows he shall not die.

I suffer;—and I suffer innocent:—
Thou sufferest too, to whom my strength is lent.
I see the faces pale before Thy face,
I follow on the stones the blood-drops' trace
That marks Thy passage; Thine o'erwhelming woe
Reaches me only in its overflow.
I feel this agony that shuts me in
Is rather Thine than mine:—I know no sin
Against Thee: who art Thou, that silent thus

Pacest before me this way dolorous,
Unto a bitterer ending. We shall part
When the red-handed executioners
Snatch at their prey, and, mangled as Thou art,
For Thee begin the fresh day's massacres.
Yea, ghastly work on Golgotha is done,
But we move forward to a ghastlier one.

How slow, how slow Thou goest! My own flesh
Is fainting with Thy faintness;—as it were
In my own wounds, the furrows bleed afresh,
The thorns anew spike through the clotted hair.
Upon Thy wounded shoulders the hard load
Slackens itself, because thereunder I
Labour in pain: along this pitiless road
Breaks from Thy breast at least the one less sigh
Through strain and sweat of mine. Yea, Thou and I
Together keep a piteous company
Along a path that still more steep must grow,
And where Thou goest I perforce must go.
Some little edge of every keener stroke
Fastens itself on me; beneath Thy yoke
I grow more near Thee, and Thy pains grow mine,
Deeper and deeper am I pierced through Thee:
But this I share, but this I suffer of Thine,
May it avail, through this my ministry,
One pang to soften of Thy agony.
Would I had more to bear, and could divine
The bond between us, that my soul might call
To Thine beside, and say, 'Take me, take all!'

I follow Thee, as one that followeth
The leader he hath chosen until death;

Ever behind Thee, till we come on high;
Then I shall see Thy face, and see Thee die,
And know Thee better:—but my soul is vext
By Now, and Then; and I am much perplext
'Twixt that which is, and was, and is to be.
It seems that I have thus been following Thee
All my life long,—what was it came before
I have forgotten;—it was naught and poor:
And shall I stay with Thee for evermore?
Or shall I lose Thee? lose Thy Cross and Thee?
Then, what were loveliest life and liberty?
All this is strange, unknown;—and who art Thou,
Most unknown, most compelling, who dost bow
My body with Thy burden, and my heart
With heaviness, where Heaven and earth take part?
If I might see Thy face! But I have felt,
If once I saw it my last strength would melt
In an unknown passion of love! So, let it be;
It is enough that I am serving Thee.

I know, and, Lord, Thou knowest, and to me
It seems no other knoweth, how this Cross
Eats out its path of anguish secretly,
Turning all sense to pain, all life to loss.
Deep in the heart the springs of hope are drained,
And withered is all sweetness at its root;
As if from out the universe remained
But one blank pain perpetual, white and mute.
And yet from this, the bitterest extreme,
I flee no more; and without suffering deem
The daylight void;—a wearier task it were,
Fleet-footed o'er the flowery fields to fare,
Than thus with Thee, for Thee, Thy Cross to bear.
With all its penetrating pain untold,

With all its charm occult, that doth transmute
Itself into the Tree of Life, whose fruit
Some mystery Divine doth yet enfold.
Its weight I bear up to the fatal hill;
Then must it bear thy weight, and must fulfil
The doom which deepens round us as we tread,
Till the dread hours be all accomplished;—
The awful hours to which we still ascend:
But Thee I follow, I follow, to the end!

Thee! In the shadow of Thy sorrow I go,—
All earth and air are throbbing with Thy woe,
Past words to utter, past man's heart to feel:—
Heart of my heart! Thou makest Thine appeal
For more than love, for more than pity,—alas!
What am I that such grace on me should pass
To bring me close to Thee? Thou dost not know,
That I am Thine, that at Thy feet laid low,
For Thee, for Thee, adoring breaks my heart,
Led with the vile to slaughter as Thou art,
Beneath Thy torment bowed, and bound, and bruised:—
I too, within Thy passion found and used,
May henceforth by no power be separate;
Here I abide, bound, fixed, predestinate.
Thou needest me,—yes, even to complete
The last faint passage of Thy failing feet:
I think that Thou wilt never call me friend,
Nor know that in Thy shadow I attend;
Yet once,—O great, myterious Sufferer,
Turn unto me, and at the last confer
One word on me who am Thy Cross-bearer!

VERONICA

THOU, even thou, Veronica,
Thou hast thy part too in this day;
No Mother thou on Golgotha,
Only a stranger on the way,

Or at thy own door in the street,
The street of dolours, on whose stones
Slowly went by the holy feet,
Through scornful looks, through mocking tones.

Those weary feet! unwounded still,
Though failing in the heavy fall,
Still steadfast pressing to the hill,
There to be pierced the last of all.

Thine still this relic of thy grief,
The linen fine as gossamer,
The white thrice-folded handkerchief,
Which speaks for evermore of her

Who with her own hand wiped the sweat,
With delicate hand, and tears that flowed,
Wherewith the Holy Face was wet,
So near to death upon the road.

So near to death, and yet how far!
Thus fainting, and thus agonised,
More than three hours before Thee are;—
Within them what world's woe comprised!

Veronica, thine hour has struck!
Thy moment comes, thy Lord draws nigh:
To each there comes one chance of luck;
Oh, watch and pray lest it pass by!

Blessed art thou, Veronica!
That springest from thy open door;
Woman, and Christ, upon the way
Ye meet one moment and no more;

Amid the roaring and the din,
Where the mid-waves of fury toss,
With agony without, within,
Between the scourging and the Cross.

Beneath its crown of thorns replies
The Holy Face to thine for aye;
Deep in thy heart thy comfort lies,
Veronica, from this thy day.

THE IMPENITENT THIEF[1]

SAVE thyself first! if Thou indeed
  Be Christ, the King of Israel,
Now is Thy time, Thy time of need,
  To help Thyself and us as well.
I will not own Thee Master thus,
Who canst not save Thyself nor us.

I do not call Thee Christ; for me
  No Christ is, nor hath ever been;
Long underfoot we trampled Thee,
  Now Thou hast equal place between.
'Thou lifted up from earth shalt draw
All men'—but not this one outlaw.

Thou wilt not save in days to come,
  No, not Thine own, Thine innocent;
The lips that called on Thee are dumb
  In death, when all their cries are spent:
Thy little ones without a friend
Wail day and night, and none defend.

Gaunt, hollow-eyed, the millions pass
  In blank and fathomless despair;
Imploring hands to heaven, alas!
  They lifted, but Thou wast not there;

[1] Reprinted from *Ballads of the North.*

The sick, the starved, the shamed, the slave,
Thou didst not show Thyself to save.

I know Thee long, I saw the crowd
That strove to touch Thy garment's hem,
The tears that flowed, the heads that bowed,
I mocked at Thee, I mocked at them;
Thy face I saw, Thy voice I heard,
Yet nothing in me spoke or stirred.

I do not call Thee Lord;—if Thou
Didst make this world, it was ill-made:
It is too late to save me now,
Long, long ago I wanted aid.
I am no servant, no, nor friend,
Who did not find Thee till this end.

Thou didst not save me when my birth
Doomed me to shame and misery,
Thou didst not save me when the earth
Her misbegotten scorned in me,
Thou didst not save when my first crime
Drove me and fixed me to the slime.

The tortured men for hidden gold
That made my pastime and my prey,
The children into slavery sold,
The butchered corpses by the way,
The ravished maidens in despair,
Thou didst not save, I did not spare.

How many, who will call Thee Lord,
Turn on their side again to sleep;

Thy blood, Thy tears for them were poured,
No need for them to bleed or weep:
They are content that Thou hast died;—
But I with Thee was crucified.

They fix their eyes on Thee for gain
Of Thy completed sacrifice,
They buy their pleasure by Thy pain,
Set free, for Thou hast paid the price;
I go not free, I pay the cost,
Yet they are saved, and I am lost.

Some stand afar, and some allowed
Near—but no closer may they win.
Once on Mount Sinai in the cloud
Moses alone might enter in:
Here on Mount Golgotha we Three,
Alone within the Agony.

'On Thy right hand, on Thy left hand,
Within Thy kingdom, Lord, to sit;'
So prayed she who has come to stand
Here, where she little dreamed of it.
I have not asked nor prized the grace,
But I have first the left-hand place.

'To them for whom it is prepared.'
How long ago? Have I been led
By eyes that knew, by hands that cared,
Down all dark ways, until this dread
Accomplishment, and set on high
In this unlooked-for company?

If Thou art Lord, and Thou didst choose
  Those who should drink this cup with Thee,
The saint, the friend Thou didst refuse,
  To lay Thy fatal hand on me;
Peter with Jesus would have died,
Yet I am here, and he denied.

O Mother of Sorrows, in thy place!
  The sword is piercing through thy heart;
The years ran on, the years apace,
  The slow hours rend thy soul apart;
But through my flesh the nails are driven,
Part in thy pains to me is given.

Kings cast their crowns before Thy feet,
  Praying Thee, use us for Thy sake!
Earth's fairest for Thy service sweet
  Their bed among the vilest make;
Saints spurn their flesh to share Thy lot;—
Yet all of these approach me not.

I suffer with Thee to the last,
  I drink the dregs of all with Thee,
The world's Redeemer holds me fast
  Beside Him on His cross to be;
But the Redemption He will win
Will touch me not, nor take me in.

Didst Thou exalt me to this height
  Of awful fellowship with Thee,
To cast me back into the night
  Of sin, and sin's satiety?
To point a moral, and adorn
Thy triumph's tale, have I been born?

'With the same baptism baptized'
As Thou Thyself, the worlds between,
I the most vile and most despised,
I whom no water has made clean,
What meaning in my fate is found,
For me unwilling brought and bound?

None weep for me; no rudest pang
Is spared, and no last cruelty:
Here to the whole world's gaze I hang,
Whole generations gaze at me:
They will not pity me; but Thou—
I feel Thy pity on me now.

'Forgive, they know not what they do,'
Though open wounds are plain to see;
Dost Thou perchance forgive me too,
Who have but flung hard words at Thee?
Words are but little gain or loss
To Him who hangs upon the cross.

The hours are dark, the hours are slow,
Their shadows are the shadow of fire;
Yet in their flame some foul stains go,
Some scales drop from me and expire.
Yea, I receive my deeds' reward,
Yea, here and now, some sight restored.

'The last shall be the first;—the first
Last'—ah! who knoweth what swift flame
Eats out the heart of things accurst,
Burns from the soul the shroud of shame?
Who knoweth what new blood may run
In the new veins with Thee made one?

O Crowned with thorns! dost Thou infuse
  Through Suffering, Love itself in me?
Apart from Thee I cannot choose;
  Can I unloose my soul from Thee?
Between us Thou hast forged a bond
That reaches through the worlds beyond.

Thou speakest low, Thou speakest yet,
  O heart of mine, and can it be!
Are these my eyes with tears are wet?
  O voice that no one hears but me!
But between Thee and me alone
Some words have passed, some words are known.

What hast Thou said?—Ah this shall be
  Recorded not in any page—
To me the lost, whose memory
  Accurst shall pass from age to age?
This secret I with me shall keep
There where the just and unjust sleep.

A WORD FROM THE CROSS

'He saith unto His Mother, Woman, behold thy son.'—
JOHN xix. 26.

THIS is the Sword, the Sword long prophesied,
('Yea, it shall pierce through thine own soul also.')
'I came upon the earth,' He said Himself,
'To bring a sword, not peace.' John, the beloved,
Beheld the vision in the after days:
'Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.'[1]
But he had heard it first: he hears it now,
In these dividing words—Behold thy son,
Woman,—from dying lips, that first of all
Hung on thy breasts, whose last kiss has been given,
And whose last word to thee now sunders thee
From thy supreme and solitary bond,
And opens through thine agonising heart
Th' immortal wound of vaster agonies.

'This then I leave thee; I depart from thee;
I go unto the Father: My first cry,
My first soft cry was thine, and hushed by thee
Upon thy happy bosom: My last cry
Is to the Father, rends the earth apart,
Heaving with awful planetary throes;
And more than this, rends Me away from thee;

[1] Rev. i. 16.

And more than all, rends thy own soul in twain,
No longer Mother of the Only Son.'

Woman, beneath whose feet the reeling chasm
Reaches to Adam in his burial-place;
He who first named the Woman, and in Eden
Called her the Mother of all Living, Eve,—
(That was in Eden, in the first of days:)—
Now the last days begin, on Calvary.
And thou, in sickening shocks, hour after hour,
Through every fibre of thy living flesh
And soul, absorbed in single motherhood,
Hast mingled with the Passion of thy Child
Thy Passion, and with fainting feet hast trod
The long and bleeding way; and felt the end
Still, still, so far; and stiffenest now within
Immeasurable lengths of agony,
Alone with Him upon the whole world's peak
And pinnacle of pain, and canst no more:—
Now, even, O Woman, doth begin, not end,
Thy bitterer Passion, now from thy Beloved
Break the low, tortured words, heard but by thee,
Calling thee to a mightier martyrdom.

O human motherhood, that now dissolves,
With human life dissolving, in the flame
Of that diviner, more mysterious Love
Of the Dove of Heaven that overshadowed thee
With wings wherein the wind herself had bound;[1]
Thyself unto thyself at last revealed,—
The Virgin of the World, a veiled, dim dream,
The Mother of all Living Things that were,
Great Vestal Goddess of the East and West,

[1] Hosea iv. 19.

Worshipped at every hearth-fire in the world,
Cried on through every hour of woman's woe,[1]
Mysteriously foreshadowed and foreknown,
Throned in the upper and the nether sphere,
Star of the Sea, and Mistress of the Moon!

Now, but a death-pale woman on the height
Of Calvary, and nought left thee but one hour
Of mortal anguish with thy Crucified,
Now hast thou come to the Mount of Sacrifice,
Now, through interminable night and day,
Givest thou back the Father this thy Lamb;
And he, in the hour of need supreme and drear,
Surrenders thee, yes, even thee, at last.
And still beyond this gulf of bitterness,
Which thou, though standing here, mayst cross no more,
Thou yet shalt hear His cry at uttermost
Of dereliction, passed beyond thy reach,
'My God, my God, thou hast forsaken Me!'
Forsaken He, yet not forsaking thou.

This is the travail of the second Eve:
In the postponed, yet long-anticipate
Hour of thy sorrow, and the bitter Sea.
Thou to whose youth the long-drawn agonies
And labour of the mortal child bearer
Were spared,[2] that all the floods at once should burst
Over thy head fore-doomed, and sweep thee down,
Down past the nethermost blackness of the pit,

[1] 'Maria mi diè, chiamata in alte grida.'—Dante, *Paradiso*, Canto xv. 133.

[2] Luke ii. 7, 16.

To the deep that lieth under[1] from all time,
And from the deluge, dark, illimitable,
Should rise a race new-born, whose Mother art thou.

Strong is thy travail, and the race to be
Dies, or is born, in thy maternal pangs.
Are we to live, O Mother? Shall we lie
Unquickened, Motherless? Thy great Reply,
Thy Fiat, in the morning of thy days,
Brought Heaven to earth, brought thee thy crown of life;
When the Day-star of the Orient shined on men,
To give the light to those that sat in the dark
And shadow of death,[2] the light that through this hour
Is flickering down in uttermost struggle with Death.

O Mother! Mother! comes thy children's cry,
The far-off cry of children numberless,
Borne to thee on the summit of thy woes;
Mingling in new and multitudinous plaint
With hollow groan, and breaking of the heart.
Shuddering, thy vision opens on the streams
Of millenarial wreck and wretchedness,
Swarming, converging, from the whole globe's face;
Sinful, degraded, horrible, distraught.
'Tis for thy bosom that they make appeal,
That has known none but Beauty Itself till now,
Lovely, the shrine of very Loveliness.
Dost thou refuse, recoil, at this extreme,
Confronted with this overwhelming call?
Hast thou then motherhood to spare for these,

[1] Gen. xlix. 25. [2] Luke i. 78, 79.

And all their miserable, unknown want,
In a succession without end? And thou,
Immaculate Mother of the Son of God,
Most Blissful Mother of the Heavenly Babe,
Most tender Mother of the Child that grew
In wisdom and in stature at thy side,
Most mournful Mother of the Son of Man,
Suffering the two-fold horror of birth and death,
Henceforward Mother of the Sons of Men.[1]

'Behold thy Mother!'—the last spoken word
To the disciple,—interchange of loss
And gain unequal through all after-days.
And the disciple, from that hour, 'tis said,
Claimed as his own, and took, the gift of God.
But thy acceptance without note or word
Passes,—no need to signify the same.

'But oh! for one word more,—for one last kiss
Upon those writhing feet, clasped yet alive,
Yet once, my son!'—but no—no murmur falls
From thy sad lips down all the centuries.
Mute, motionless, dost thou receive the thrust
Of this Annunciation; hid within
The three hours' darkness over all the earth.
Only thy silence through the ages stands.

[1] Romans viii. 29.

MATER DESOLATA

This is the end, O Mother Piteous.
This is the end of all those sanctitudes
Hid in thy heart, and only known to thee,
And all is over, all is still as death,
Death which is here, and face to face with thee,
Thou living One who wast the Gate of Heaven.
This is his hour; and he has bowed thee down,
And bruised thee to the earth:—this hour is Death's.
This is the end which both have, hand in hand,
Ever foreseeing, journeyed to so long;
Yea, step by step, and hour by hour, drawn near.
And thou, thou hast thy Son within thy arms;
As thou didst hold thy naked new-born babe,
So on thy knees thy naked newly-dead
Is laid, thy Child, His head is on thy arm;
Here hast thou Him, O Mother, and even yet,
Sitting upon the ground, and all the seas
Of sorrow broken over thee, even yet
Art thou enthroned supreme in all this sphere,
The Queen of Sorrows upon Golgotha.

Mother, whose heart is deep as the deep sea!
What hast thou seen to-day, what hast thou done?
What is this place of slaughter and of skulls?
What day has this been, since the first ray broke,
And all the Temple precincts woke, and stirred
With bleatings of the lambs? What hours were those

Till noon?—when from the Temple steps there rang
The blast of trumpets, telling the Lamb was slain,
And over thee was reared and fixed the Cross?
What were those hours that passed—or were they years?—
Here,—and Thou standing by? Here didst thou stand;
Until a great cry rent the earth apart,
And in the Temple shook down right and left
The columns, and the Veil was rent in the midst.
In all the days was ever a day like this?
Or any Mother of mortal race like thee?
Whose feet have trod the long way dolorous.

Thou hast thy dead, O Mother! All is still:
The swords are in thy heart; but in the air
Deepens the quiet of the Sabbath Eve;
Trembles no more the earth to any moan,
Reverberates through the mountains no more cry,
The day is dying, silent as the dead.
Evening:—there was one evening long ago,
When He had not yet come to Bethlehem,
And thou, and Joseph with thee, didst await
In an impenetrable ecstasy
The Midnight, under all the blissful stars.
He came, He came;—and He is gone again,
In darkness deeper, more impenetrable.
Evening—and desolation uttermost,
A bleak and bitter waste of stony hills,
This, this remains, the fruit of all thy years;
And before Midnight thou must lose whate'er
Of treasure still thou guardest in thy arms.

What fire is that which burns behind the hills?
The hills in the South—a spreading, slow, white fire,

And now ascending, orbèd, great, and pale?
O mighty Mother Moon, thou art all amazed!
Thy face is changed even now from white to wan.
What dost thou gaze upon across the spheres?
And who are these left on the Hill with thee?
In all thy wanderings through the fields of heaven,
The happy fields of heaven where grow the stars
In clusters, and among the hollow clouds,
Through silver centuries of centuries,
Mother of Months, thou hast not dreamt of this.

Still, still thou movest on, as in a trance;—
That trance divine of ten enchanted moons
Which over earth and air and ocean shed
Such hush of heaven that still they sleep in it.
And thou awakest now in wonderment,
And in a horror, and art turned to blood
Already in the darkness of the sky.
And what hast thou to do with Death, O Moon,
Who bringest all Earth's younglings to their Birth?

For thou art musing still, how all that time
Each herb, and moss, and tree drew from thy beams
Benignant influence, and thou didst infuse
Undreamed of beauty into every form
That did unfold itself;—while all the wings
Of butterflies waved glorious in the hues
Of other worlds, and all the quickened earth
Heaved with the upward rush of lily stalks
Budding, and every living thing rejoiced
In its own life, and all the harvesting
Was of the overladen corn and fruit.
The bees dropped rivulets of honey-gold
Through that unequalled year, and all the woods

Of the North were ravished with a music known
Never before among the nightingales;
And the mystic flower of the Samoyedes
Blossomed at midnight starry from the snow;
And from their fountains bubbling the swift streams
Sang to the stars a song of speechless joy,
Rushing along the rivers to the sea.
And all the brimming estuaries were filled
With many-coloured shoals, and every beach
With the soft wash of each retreating wave
Was strewn with iridescent multitudes
Of shells, and under the enrapturing skies
Auroral and nocturn, the halcyon Earth
Lay brooding through the long white sacred dream,
While the White Rose of the World hid in her heart
The Life of the World, and it was one with hers.
And thou, O magical, mysterious Moon,
Knewest all through thy interwoven dance,
And incantations betwixt sphere and sphere,
The pulse responsive, and the rise and fall
Of the Mother's bosom that kept time with thee.

For on thy breast, He lay, O Mother!—thy breast,
That could endure such sweetness, strengthened now
Through all thy days and nights of heavenly hope,
And marvelling desire, to bear at last
Thy consummation of beatitude.
The lovely limbs are thine, the downy head
That nestles on thy arm, the soft, small mouth,
The little hands are thine; it is thy Babe
That smiles upon thee with celestial eyes;
The Heaven of heavens breathes low upon thy breast.
Yea, thou didst dare the dazzling deeps of joy
Whereof none knoweth, none could bear but thee;

And all these things are hidden in thy heart.
And deeper grows thy heart with every day,
A royal water-lily that expands
Crown within crown around its golden Sun,
Pale with the lustre of the heavens. O Child,
How dost thou grow from day to day, and stand
Already in thy budded loveliness
The Darling of the World. O Mother, the while
With what absorbed and passionate wistfulness
Thy guardian eyes above thy nurseling brood.
Thou didst prevent the dawn, because the day
Could not contain the measureless delight
That rose in thy unfathomable heart,
A fountain ever-springing, which the wells
Of Marah had not over-flooded yet,
To speed the long day's hours from joy to joy,
Within the Holy House of Nazareth.

He runs beside thee, and His eager eyes
Wait on thy wishes; thou hast watched Him wake
From dreams of Heaven, and silent with excess
Of worship, thou, with many a delicate touch
Of delicate fingers, hast arrayed His limbs,
And disentangled all the golden curls;
And out among the earliest twitterings,
Already those two faces light the path,
(The little grassy path of easy steps,
With wild-flowers opening, wet with early dew,
Stretching by unknown, steep, precipitous ways
Up to this awful rock of Calvary).
The Child and Mother, each so like to each,
And both so innocent, and both so young,
The Child of Sunrise, and the Morning Star.
This is the End, this is the Sun-setting.—

Here is the Head once more upon thy arm,
O Mother! scarcely to thy bosom pressed,
Because too bruised even to pillow there.
But one by one the piercing thorns are plucked
Out of the bleeding brows, the matted hair
Is parted tenderly, thy delicate hands
(Amidst the raining, raining of thy tears
Bathing the holy face that looked on thee
Its first, its last, and was so like to thine)
Smooth into rest its agony once more.
Through every wound of every virgin limb
Thy tender fingers feel and search and close;
The piercèd hands drop lifeless in thine own,
And cold and stiff are growing even now;
And no man sees thy face, because thy face
Is hidden in thy veil, and neither He
Beholds it now; and thou hast closed His eyes.

O Mother of Sorrows inconsolable,
Whose sufferings there could none compassionate
Save One, and He has left thee now alone!
The wrenched and ghastly feet are the same feet,
The little warm feet fondled in thy hands,
O Mother-hands! that have not, many a day,
So held Him on thy knees;—and thou hast yet
His Body, made of thine, to dress once more.
Thou hast not faltered yet, thou hast not swerved
In all thy shuddering task; the quick soft hands,
Of face and form marred more than man's before,
Have made again the image pitiful
Of a Divine, dead, marble majesty.

This Babe whom thou didst wrap in swaddling-clothes:—
Oh! that first kiss upon the dawning smile!

Oh! this last kiss upon the livid brows!
The last, last touches on the wounds that wring
Thy heartstrings, which God made too strong to break.
More priceless is this anguish than that bliss;
For whatsoever light revealed, foreshown,
Pierces thy veilèd darkness with some dim
Presage of Resurrection, or of some
Crowned seat in Heaven far, far in other days,
Never will that Immortal Son again
Have need of mortal Mother:—yet this once
A minute, and a minute more is thine.
This is thy own, to wash, to dress, to hold,
Thy Son's own Body, fruit of thine own womb,
Yea, to anoint Him for His burial,
And heap the herbs and spices round His limbs,
All things being past save this last agony,
And at the end to fold the winding-sheet.

But oh! this is the last time,—be it joy
Or sorrow, Heaven or Hell, what matters it?
For these are minutes that are passing now;
The hours have passed, the last long hours of all,
Even as passed the days and years behind;
And never, never more through all the deeps
Of that Redemption consummated now
Shall He be helpless, nursed within thy arms,
Nor shall thy hands do mother-service more.

Thou droopest lower and lower over Him,
While even now the jealous winding-sheet
Beneath thy hands is stealing Him away.
Is there no more to do?—Is there no more?

THE GLASTONBURY THORN[1]

My son, thou sayest that thy life
  Is past its blossom time,
And thou hast neither fruit nor flower
  To show for all its prime;

That thou hast watched and wanted long,
  Nor spared to toil and pray,
And nought for all thy strife remains
  But to be cast away.

Now listen what to me befell
  When all the year was past,
And in the winter what a grace
  Was brought to me at last.

For I was old, and all my house
  Were sleeping in the tomb,
When came the Word of God to me
  To leave my father's home.

I took my staff, and all alone
  I wandered to the West;
A long and weary pilgrimage,
  Till God should bid me rest.

[1] Reprinted from *Ballads of the North*.

I passed by sea, I passed by land,
I found strange folk and wild,
Until one day before my feet
This Vale at sunset smiled.

The voice within spake suddenly,
'Here is thy place to dwell':
I struck my staff into the ground,
And here I built my cell.

I cleared a little space of earth
Beside it either hand,
And planted in my garden plot
The flowers of Holy Land.

Oh, sweet and soft with mist and rain
Is all this island air;
The little birds among the boughs
Make music everywhere.

And when the streams in Spring unbind,
Trickling the moors across,
The violets blue, the violets white,
Are hidden in the moss.

The people came about my door,
A simple woodland race,
And many a meal I shared with them
In many a dwelling-place.

I spake to them of Christ the Lord,
And of the things I knew;
They listened, and they made no sign,
No faith among them grew.

But soon my garden flowers took root
With little care or toil,
And flourished through the summer months
Upon the stranger soil.

Anemones in April days,
Of silver shower and shine,
Were messengers from scarlet fields
Of Spring in Palestine.

And starry-pointed, white and gold,
The pale narcissus head,
Along the shady bank in May
A foreign fragrance shed.

The rosemary put forth in June
Her shoots both sweet and strong;
I thought of burning rocky paths
The desert sides along.

Oh, glorious white as heaven's own light,
The Lily rose, a Queen:
A sun by day, a star by night,
Glimmering my prayers between.

And when the hot and cloudless sky
Lay over field and fold,
In August, in the harvest time,
Flamed forth the marigold.

O Mary! Mary! at thy name
My head in dreams is bowed;
I muse upon thy face with thoughts
I cannot speak aloud.

The far-off years roll back, my soul
  Across the bitter sea
Returns, and there is only one
  Day of all days for me.

O Mary! Mary! for my loss
  I mourn until I die;
The very thieves and murderers had
  A better place than I.

Yet I too had my turn at last,
  I who awoke too late;
The lowest of thy servants still
  Outside the door may wait,

And find forgiveness in his task;
  Yea, even unto me
Was granted gift my heart must keep
  In mute humility.

O Mary! Mary! I have seen!
  It cannot pass away;
Thy face is living in my heart
  For ever, night and day.

Oh, on one night of wondrous light,
  Thy Babe upon thy knee,
When first He smiled, O mother mild,
  One Joseph stood by thee.

But I, another Joseph, stood
  Beside thee at the end;
And when thine arms took back their own,
  Did I thy will attend.

Another night—oh, such a night
Again earth will not see!—
For that night's sake forget me not
Until I come to thee!

I wander far, I lose myself;—
What was the flower, the last,
That told me that the summer days
In this green land were past?

I think it was the myrtle soft,
I sheltered by the wall,
That flower of fate that blooms so late,
For maiden's coronal.

But when the time of flowers was past,
And Autumn leaves were sere,
Darkness drew on, and all the wold
With wailing winds was drear.

Early the Winter settled down,
The snow fell thick and deep,
The birds were hushed, the frozen rills
Were bound in glassy sleep.

And when at last drew nigh at hand
The holy Christmas Eve,
A pathless wilderness of white
Was all I could perceive.

I was alone, and not a step
For many weeks had crossed
The buried moors, and I of men
Forgotten seemed, and lost.

My food was spent; for many days
I had not broken fast;
A little bird whose breast was red
Had shared my crumbs—the last.

And now it seemed my time was come
My labour to forsake;
And sadly and in tears I knelt,
And to my Master spake,—

'Lord, Thou hast set me here to sow
The seed of faith for Thee;
I sow in vain, I may not reap,
Nor blade nor corn I see.

'Thou callest me, and I must come
Out of Thy garden ground,
With empty hands and incomplete,
Once more defaulting found.

'I know I shall forget my fault,
When once I see Thy face;
But, Lord, this is one bitter hour
For the lost time of grace.'

Then at midnight, all silently,
A spirit drew me forth;
And three bright stars high overhead
Were pointing to the North.

But a strange glow was in the air
Vibrating sparks and strings,
And all the midnight was alive
With throbbing souls of things.

A quivering pulse of blood-red flame
  Leapt up the heavenly height,
And soft and swift the rosy fire
  Played in and out the night.

And all the world was lighted up,
  I could not see from whence;
I heard strange music in my ears,
  I could not catch its sense.

The snow blushed crimson fitfully,
  Like water turned to wine;
I stepped into the open air,
  And saw a wondrous sign.

For there my staff of pilgrimage,
  That in the ground stood fast,
Had shot into a living stem,
  Whose boughs were outward cast;

And every branch was quick with leaf,
  And bud and flower and thorn;
Beneath my gaze in still amaze
  The opening blooms were born.

O tree so bright 'mid snowy white,
  How didst thou smile on me:
The Master at the Feast to-night
  Hath not forgotten thee!

And when the Northern Lights had died,
  And night lay still and deep,
My eyes for very blissfulness
  Did close themselves in sleep.

I cannot tell what voices near
In sleep conversed with mine;
I do not know if angels came
To bring me bread and wine.

But I lived on, I wanted not,
I was not left alone;
Our Master needs no other help
When He would feed His own.

And the next spring, at Easter-tide,
When the soft ferns unrolled,
And all the moorland sea of gorse
Tossed its fresh waves of gold,

A thousand souls with one accord
Came to the water's side,
And bowed themselves beneath the Sign
Of Christ the Crucified.

And since that day a thousandfold
The word has borne increase;
This fair and fruitful country lies
All in one bond of peace.

They have not seen what I have seen,
They have not touched the Hand;
Blessèd are they, because by faith
They love and understand.

O Lord, Thy purpose does not fail,
The work is Thine alone;
All times are harvest times with Thee:
Enough, to be Thine own.

THE SISTINE MADONNA

SHE treads the unseen stair of heaven,
  And softly step by step comes down;
She waits until the fall of even,
  When lamps are lighting in the town;
And then her tender footsteps come
Through the remembered ways to home.

She bears her Babe upon her arm,
  Her Babe enfolded in a dream;
Her Babe against her breast is warm;
  With locks that backward wave and stream,
And eyes of deep, unearthly bliss:—
Oh, whose mysterious Child is this?

It is mine own! each Mother cries;
  The lovely face come back to her,
The little kissing mouth that lies
  Close to her cheek, the eager stir
Of little arms her neck around,
So glad to be at home, and found.

To every mother's heart that grieves
  Over her lost, her little ones,
She carries home on Christmas Eves
  The daughters missing and the sons:
Oh, they are glad to see again
The house they left in tears and pain.

'I bring you back your child I keep,
I keep in peace for each of you;
They play in daisies ankle-deep,
They sleep in beds of violets blue:
I wear for them your face and eyes,
I could not soothe them otherwise.'

And yet—her deep eyes speak for her:—
'It is my own Child that I bring:
The heart of heaven is holier;
Yet my heart still keeps pondering
On the old lowliness of earth,
The winter day, the night of birth.

The narrow cave at Bethlehem,
Its darkness and its poverty,
What were the heights of heaven to them,
That night of His nativity?
This night I come to be alone
With Him, the Child that is my own.

The throne in heaven, the great white throne,
Th'illimitable fields of light,
The glory of th' Ascended One,
The splendours of the Saints in white,
Could not console me for that first
Hour when my Babe new-born I nursed.

Oh, heavy is a crown to wear,
Even a crown in Paradise;
I weary sometimes, set to bear
The gaze of these adoring eyes;
My wakeful heart for silence moans,
Amid the myriad music-tones.

Through singing of the Morning-Star,
  Through highest heaven's triumphal hymn,
Through pealing bells from churches far,
  Through voices of the Seraphim,
Pierces one small and helpless cry;—
I hear it, Joseph hears and I.

It calls me, and I cannot stay:
  For you and me the selfsame grace:—
There shall be never on Christmas Day
  By mothers' hearths an empty place;
As past the stars, and past the suns,
I bear to earth the little ones.

ENVOI

Oh, the angels carry them away,
  The cruel angels who never have wept
But Mary remembers all the day
  The sorrowful watch by the Cross she kept.
The angels will never turn nor stay,
  Nor sigh for the mother's arms bereft;
But Mary carries them all the way
  When they revisit the home they left.

'PER GAUDIA TUA'

SLOWLY the pale horizon dawned
  Around an English wood,
Low lying in the fields of May;
  And at its edge I stood.

There is no dark in Maytime,
  Dim between dusk and dawn:
The small wild creatures of the night
  Had noiselessly withdrawn;

The birds had not yet wakened:—
  And down the hushed wood-walk
I heard a sweet sound coming
  Of young and childish talk.

The cuckoo only rested not;
  His wild and wandering note
All night had called from depths of air
  So near, and so remote.

Light-footed came two visitants,
  Through folded bush and bower;
Their garments, faintly shimmering,
  Were like the white May-flower.

A dream of maiden loveliness
Seemed stranger-like to pass;
And by the hand a little child
She led along the grass.

His face from out the under-maze
Broke like a wonder fresh;
The heavenly roses of the dawn
Were breathing in his flesh.

And both, with fond, familiar eyes,
That swerved not from their mark,
Through the protecting thicket thorns
Looked deep into the dark.

They stayed their steps by nests concealed
Of many a song-bird brown;
The child stretched out his little hand,
And stroked the heads of down.

Her darker mantle in their play
Had fallen from her head;
And all her hair about her neck
The boy's fond fingers spread.

The Day-star in the glowing sky
Shone like the eyes serene,
Of her who seemed to be in years
The elder by fifteen.

The lovely world grew pale and light,
The calm world bathed in dew;
All through the sky, across the fields,
Sounded—Cuckoo! Cuckoo!

The child looked upwards to the loud
Aërial salute;
Her eyes were stars, but His were suns:—
He mused one moment, mute.

'I hold,' He said, 'this small round globe,
That rolls within My hand;
I hear this cuckoo's floating call
In many a far-off land.

'The boundless forests of the North
Shake off their frozen dream;
Secret and irresistible,
The rushing, rustling stream

'Breaks, breaks, through stem, and branch, and leaf,
And wilds without a way,
Where twenty thousand fugitives
Are hiding night and day.

'They hear the cuckoo's homeward call,
They feel the homeward thrill;
Flight! Flight! and Flight! whate'er befall:—
Oh, how they suffer still!'

'But, O my little Jesus!'
The Maiden-Mother said,
'Dost Thou not love this England,
Where we before have played?

'The copses and the meadows
Are all so cool and sweet;
The moss and the small grasses grow
Soft for Thy little feet.

'And oh! the beds of primroses
For Thy own limbs seem made,
And for the heavenly night when I
Might Thee thereon have laid.

'Oh, blessèd is the narrow home,
And the belovèd hills!
Yet through the stones of Nazareth
Some awful boding thrills.

'But in this dewy England,
Where trickling brooks run clear,
I clasp Thee close, my little Child,
And I forget to fear!'

'Across the sea,' He answered,
'They call it Angel-land;
But better than the Angels'
Thy own sweet name shall stand;

'And the fair sons and daughters
Of this most blessèd Isle,
Shall call it Mary's Dowry,
And flourish in thy smile.'

'Oh! I must bring them apple-trees,
And blossom of the bean,
And plum-trees white, and cherry-trees,
And gardens in the green,

'Of roses and campanulas,
And my tall lilies white,
And irises and marigolds:'
She spoke in her delight.

'But, O My Mother!' and His voice
Was wistful then, and sad,
'Out in the dawn together,
Are we not sometimes glad?

'Have I not brought thee some sweet hours?
Is it all tears and pain?
Am I not thine for evermore?'—
The cuckoo called again.

'If I had never come to thee?——'
I heard the Child's voice say:
But they had passed my hiding-place,
Out on their own free way.

Then the long shadows suddenly
Swept over,—and Day broke;
And with the sun the thick white mist
Rose from the ground like smoke.

And swiftly each upcurling wave
Uncovered in its fold
Breadth after breadth of cowslip stalks,
And myriad heads of gold.

The Child, the Mother, ankle-deep,
Stood in the fragrant sea;
And over them the morning mist
Rolled upward, silently.

The veil of vapour rent, and left
The glittering meadow bare
And empty:—they had vanished too,
And were no longer there.

But the height of heaven quivered with joy,
Where the larks hung out of sight;
And a happy bird on every bough
Sang praises to the light.

And through the wood a glint of blue
Was tracked, the stems between,
The deep-sea blue of hyacinths,
Where'er their steps had been.

But 'mid the morning chorus
Of the May music wild,
I missed the heavenlier voices
Of the Mother and the Child.

A ROSEBUD WHITE IN PARADISE

In the midmost Bower of Paradise
A bud the Mother nursed;
A bud that should have been a Rose,
But the frost had seized it first;
And she waited long and wistfully
For the blossom-sheath to burst.

But the Bridegroom spake without the door,
The door of the Maiden Bower:
'O My Mother, have I not waited long,
And been patient many an hour?
And dost thou still delay Me,
And keep from Me My flower?'

'But oh! My Son,' the Mother said,
'This one has greatly dared;
And steep and awful were the paths,
And long was the way she fared;
And never another pilgrim
His cup with her has shared.

Can one pass to the bride-chamber
Straight from the Cross away?
First in my Bower to rest a while
The travelled Bride must stay;
And feel the warmth of mother-hands,
To bathe and to array.

It needeth the dews of Paradise
The weary feet to steep;
It needeth the balms of Paradise,
For the wounds were sore and deep;
And the breeze that blows over Paradise
With lulling sound of sleep.'

And the winds of heaven blew soft and south,
Till a sweet sleep slowly stole;
And the deep deep dews of the garden of God
Washed over the white soul;
And the dropping tears of balsam trees
The bruisèd flower made whole.

And ever and ever unfolded
The rosebud on her knee;
And ever fuller and fuller
To a White Rose perfectly;
A Queen of Roses in fragrance,
And in virginity.

And listening for a sound within,
Again the Bridegroom spake:
'Has she not come from far to Me,
And suffered for My sake?
And now, it is My hour at last:—
When will My Bride awake?'

Her voice was low, and full of tears:—
'So late from Calvary!—
I have these long life-hurts to heal,
Remembering Thee and me:
Some come to me like sleeping babes;
—But this was like to Thee.

Oh, thirsting through the wilderness,
This one went long and long;
And sought Thy face, and found it not;
And still, for Love's sake strong,
Rejected, bore Thy Cross for Thee,
Patient through all Thy wrong.'

But the Bridegroom's voice was passionate:—
'Mother, deny Me not!
I too, unseen, through the passes went,
While the scorching noon was hot;
I was watching too through winter nights
My Rose without a spot!'

The Mother rose, and stepped across,
And did the door unclose;
She smiled serenely on her Son,
The smile He only knows;
She gave into the Bridegroom's hand
The Rose, the bridal Rose.

The Bridegroom held it tenderly,
His Rose so white and wan;
And as He gazed on it the tears
Down the face of the Bridegroom ran,
The Bridegroom's face, that was fairer
Than any face of Man.

The Bridegroom laid it on His breast;
And in a swift surprise,
Trembled the pale white Rose, and flushed
With colour of sunrise,
And deepened to the heart of hearts,
Rose-red of Paradise.

The heavens dissolved in music,
And the music in a mist;
The Secret of that crimson cloud
Nor Saint nor Seraph wist:
For none beheld the Bridegroom's face,
As the red Rose he kissed.

INNOCENTS' DAY

It was in the night of a winter mild,
Joseph and Mary talked and smiled;
And with them journeyed the Heavenly Child.

'Mother, three days has my birthday flown:
What gifts wilt thou give for my birthday crown?'
They came to the street of a Kentish town.

They stayed where a boy of twelve years old,
Pored over an ancient book unrolled;
His cheeks were burning, his hands were cold.

'I struggle through darkness to know Thy word,
Give me Thy grace, and Thy help afford,
That some day I may be Thy servant, Lord!'

A hand on his shoulder Jesus laid:
'Come with me to my school,' He said;
And the boy went with them unafraid.

A maiden pallid, with gasping breath,
The dews on her forehead, kneels and saith,
'Take not my heart from Thy heart in death!'

Through the rising waters the tapers swim;
She felt His kiss as her eyes grew dim:
'Be mine!' He whispered;—she went with Him.

tupefied, shivering, at midnight's turn,
a child, with its lesson yet to learn,
owered under the rod of a master stern.

Come quick to my garden, come away!
Vhere I and my brothers always play.'
he child knew nothing but to obey.

hey passed under broken walls, and hark!
hey heard a wailing that came through the dark,
o light from the threshold the way to mark.

hey followed the crying to find the door,
—Three children huddled close on the floor,
he tears like rain down their cold cheeks pour.

here was neither fire, nor table, nor bed:
We have nothing to eat,' the youngest said;
nd the eldest sobbed out, 'Mother is dead.'

he Mother folded them safe from harm,
er breast was soft, and her lap was warm;
aint Joseph the basket took from his arm:

I plucked these cherries in Paradise Row,
Vhere my strawberry garden slopes below,
hey are finer than any in Kent that grow.'

Nay, but, Sir Joseph,' Our Lady said,
It is so long since they last were fed:—
ive them the cherries, but first the bread.'

Finest wheatflour from Holy Land,
ock honey that dropped on the silver sand,
kneaded them into cakes with my hand.'

They went on their way with a gathering train;
The little children followed full fain,—
'Father Joseph, give us the cakes again!'

The window was open into the night,—
A little chamber spotless and white,
And in the chamber a little light;

By a little picture the light burned dim,
The Child and His Mother carrying Him,—
Two children rosy and round of limb;—

The innocent children had said their prayers,
Their souls were out dreaming unawares,
No bar betwixt them and the golden stairs.

His hand on their foreheads lightly lies,
He said, as He kissed their closèd eyes,
'Wake with me to-morrow in Paradise!'

A storm of blows and of curses rolled,
Where a woman unwomanly, hag and scold,
Shook her babe, her own, of two years old;

A little creature lovely and meek;—
Only the tears on its soft wet cheek
Pleaded the want that it could not speak.

The eyes of Our Lady flashed with fire,
She snatched the child, and her breast heaved higher;
'O treasure of mine! My heart's desire!'

babe was rocked on its mother's breast,
s tiny fingers like wax imprest,
s sorrowful moaning would not rest;

he little face piteous and white to see;
ıt the Boy bent over her eagerly:
Mother, O Mother, give her to Me!'

e stretched His arms;—but Our Lady sighed,
ɔr she looked on the mother weary-eyed;
ɔftly she stepped, and stood beside.

ɔme word in her ear she seemed to say,
s she drew the babe from her arms away,
nd calm in her own Child's arms it lay.

t midnight the good Priest knelt in prayer;—
e had watched through the midnight many a year,
ot knowing what time would our Lord appear.

nd all of a sudden he was aware
f a strange light shining everywhere;
e went to his casement and looked out there.

nd he saw a procession of girls and boys,
ıughing and playing with silvery noise,
nging sweet hymns of the angels' joys.

ıto the churchyard they trooped and came,
e knew each face, and he named each name;
nd yet they were somehow not the same.

And amidst them a lady fair to see;—
The little ones clung to her mantle free,
And she carried one of them tenderly.

And a white-haired father, tall and kind,
His face to the children's face inclined,
Holding their hands as they walked behind.

And last of all, came a Boy, whose air
Was that of a king, with golden hair,
Carrying a babe with exceeding care.

He caught the face of the Boy as He passed;—
He fell on his knees, and his tears fell fast;
'My Lord,' he said, 'hast Thou come at last?'

Next day, as the sexton worked long and hard,
He said, 'A green Yule makes a fat churchyard':
But the Priest, 'God has them within His guard.'

A CANTICLE OF PENTECOST

W shall we speak the mysteries of Heaven,
), Unnamed, Unimagined, Holiest,
: veil before Whose throne has not been riven,
Who only in the deeps mayst be confessed?

ore all Worlds, in the Divine Abyss,
rimal Spiration ere the morning-star,
ere Time and Space no bounds may set to bliss,
Where the great Three in One for ever are.

Thou Who didst conceive the Word of God
rticulate, incarnate, animate;
on this earth with form of manhood trod,
Thyself in flame alone incorporate.

hath not heard Thee, eye hath not perceived:
ave through indwelling of invisible flame
breath of God in mortal clay received,
Ve know Thee not, great Ghost without a name.

: wings of the wind Thy path before Thee sweep,
With thrills occult spring lilies from the sod,
/ ways are in the waters of the deep,
Thy footsteps are not known, O Ghost of God!

Yet all this thunderous, rushing universe
In each pulsation is alive with Thee;
The singing of the stars doth but rehearse
Thy works and wonders of infinity.

Thine is the quickening of the child unborn;
The flutter of the dim, unconscious life
Is Thine; and with the Mother travail-torn,
Thy enemy and ours maintains his strife.

But chiefly, O Divine Inhabitant,
Delightest Thou, Thyself to us to bow;
Thyself Thou givest,—and so great the grant,
Being All in All, we know not it is Thou.

Spirit of Peace art Thou, for Thou art Life,
And Life is Peace,—eternal, changeless, one;
Death is division, change, and war;—the strife
Of force with force:—Thy reign hath not begun.

For God as Man not only needs must die,
In conflict with the awful powers of Hell,
But even Thou, O Pure Divinity,
Must with unutterable groans as well

Make intercession even now for us,
And wait with us redemption from our foes;
In pain Thy whole creation travaileth thus
Together, Thou with us, for our repose.

But still Death wars on Life, Death is not slain,
Still are we subject to the body of death:
O Spirit, O sweet Spirit, may Thy reign
Come quickly,—long, too long it tarrieth.

Mortal flesh knows Thee not, and mortal soul,
Ravished one moment, shut from sense and earth,
As lightning sees;—then under death's control
Forgets again its heavenly home of birth.

The empire of the Spirit lost to them,
Exiles in Babylon, flesh-bound in their fall,
Dimly remembering their Jerusalem,
Their city of Peace, the Mother of us all.

As babes unconscious of the Mother's face,
And only conscious of the Mother's breast,
We drink from Thee the rivers of Thy grace,
With eyes unopened yet, nor dream the rest.

O Name still hallowed in unspokenness,
Secret as is Man's soul the innermost,
In the Sanctuary of our unconsciousness
Thee we adore and bless, O Holy Ghost!

We, human, need a God's Humanity
To love, to cling to, to compassionate;
We kiss Thy feet with tears, we look on Thee,
Lover and Lord, Who shared our own estate.

But Thou, Creator Spirit manifold,
Our narrow natures, our emotions small
Thee comprehend not, nor can converse hold
With Thee, nor love Thee passionately at all.

The image of Divinity express
Being the Son;—but no imaginings
Pierce Thy ineffable veil of blessedness,
The Light that is not of created things.

O Inspiration of all sanctity,
  Fire dropt from heights no Seraphim have trod,
Bond of the Ever-blessed Trinity,
  The uncreated Charity of God!

Thy Name in one most solemn hour was heard,
  The sacred, sorrowful, last Passover;
I will not leave you orphans, was His word,
  I will send down to you the Comforter.

Seen but once only, and by one alone,
  As the descending Dove that hovered o'er,
When the heart of Heaven was opened, and made known
  Thy soft-winged Tenderness, brooding evermore.

O Dove, that bearing still the olive leaf,
  Returnest ever to Thy ark below,
Asking but harbourage,—what can be our grief
  Possessing Thee, but lest we let Thee go?

Thou who art all unmingled clemency,
  We ask not Thy forgiveness from above;
No Miserere wails aloud to Thee,
  Who art Love itself, and Loveliness of Love.

Thee we can wound, can grieve, celestial Dove;
  What hath the Dove wherewith to wound again?
We turn to grief, not wrath, Thy fostering love,
  Driving Thee out, and comfortless remain.

Within us, and above us, and around,
  We cannot from Thy Omnipresence flee,
O Ghost Who goest with us without sound
  Or form, the Holy Self of Charity.

Mystery of mysteries, for nought can sever
Life interfused, yet all impalpable:
Joy of all joys, for Thou art ours for ever,
Spirit with spirit, indivisible.

THE GARDEN OF THE HOLY SOULS

In Thy garden, in Thy garden, though the rain
Fall, and the winds beat there,
And they stand unsheltered, piteous, in the storm,
They who were once so fair.

In Thy garden of the souls, where Thou art gardener,
Thou Who wast once so mild,
Now pruning down to naked stems and leafless
The roses that ran wild.

Oh, Thy roses once waved in the wind so sweetly,
Though thick with thorns beset;
In the morning sunshine opening, and at evening
With cool dews wet.

In Thy garden, where Thou walkest as a warder,
How poor, how small they stand;
Yet once their beauty, to the hearts that loved them,
Lighted the living land.

In Thy garden, where no smile of Thine is granted,
Yet keep within Thy heart,
A place in Paradise for these transplanted,
Still with Thee where Thou art.

In Thy garden, in Thy garden, where Thy roses
Without a thorn are sweet,
And each poor branch in endless wreaths uncloses
To kiss Thy feet!

MAKE HASTE

HYMN

The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed

O MY soul, hasten thee!
Why art thou then so slow?
Long is the way and steep,
Long is the way to go:
Hard is the way to go,
The way to go.

Dost thou remember not
The country of thy rest?
Home of thy Father's smile,
Home of thy Mother's breast:
Thy long-lost Mother's breast,
Thy Mother's breast.

Bound by these bitter streams,
Hast thou forgotten those:
Fruit of God's garden-trees,
River of Life that flows?
Listen, my Soul, it flows!
Still, still, it flows.

Captive in Babylon,
  Pining in slavery sore;
One hand hath set thee free,
  Opened the dungeon door;
  The heavy dungeon door,
    The dungeon door.

Run, and look not behind!
  Though fettered still thy feet:
The race is yet to win,
  The crown is to the fleet;
  Faint, yet pursuing fleet,
    Patient and fleet.

Loiter not, lest thou lose!
  Its lights before thee burn;
The palace of thy birth,
  The home of thy return;
  Waiting for thy return,
    For thy return.

'But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the Mother of us all.'

THE PROPHECY OF WESTMINSTER

1890

KING Edward lay at Havering Bower,
At Havering on the Hill;
Southward it looks across the land,
An English Eden still.

'To-day I pass to Thorney Isle,'
King Edward mused, and said,
'The Holy Hermit beckoned me,
Last night beside my bed.'

Then from the height of Havering,
The King and lords rode down
Through stately avenues of chase
To Romford market-town;

And on into the green wood's heart,
With all glad sounds alive,
Beneath the spreading of the oaks,
And down the Hornbeam Drive.

Oh, white, all white, the hawthorns stood,
And yellow all the whin,
And black the shining holly-bowers,
With nightingales within.

And when the bells of Navestock
The Angelus did ring,
They stayed their steeds three Aves time,
And after, spake the king:

'Make haste! Make haste! High noon is past';
And faster, at the word,
Their horses' hoofs beside the Bourne
Sprang o'er the daisied sward.

The orchards of the monks stood thick
In rosy garlands fair,
The humming of the honey-bees
Was over all the air.

The Angel faces smiled on him,
Of his East Anglian folk,
And from their woodland cottages
Curled up the thin blue smoke.

The cakes were baking on the hearth,
The byres and barns were full,
The spinning-wheels and armoiries
Held store of flax and wool;
Plenty and peace went everywhere
With good King Edward's rule.

Oh, filled with fairy cowslip gold
The little children's hands;
And fearless in his face they looked,
The lord of all these lands;

For this was not the ploughing-time,
Nor harvesting, nor hay;

It was the month of nesting birds,
The moonlight month of May;
And this was Merry England then,
When all had time to play.

The blue-winged jays before them flew,
And chattered through the wood,
And one by one the kingfishers
Flashed through the solitude.

White miles of mere at Dagenham
Were crowded to the edge
With armies of the waterfowl,
And from the secret sedge

Came notes of call, and stirrings soft
Of myriad brooding wings,
And the lordly drakes sailed out, and left
A wake of glittering rings.

The flapping herons overhead
Went with them in their course,
Until they came to Barking Creek,
And lighted down from horse.

They drank from bowls of beechen-wood,
Upon the rushy brink;
The sweetest water in the world
Is this of Thames to drink.

They loosened from the mooring-place,
They pushed from off the marge;
And up the royal river straight
They steered the royal barge.

By pleasant Plaistow in the Marsh,
Their nests the swallows keep;
In parsley and marsh-marigold
The cattle stood knee-deep.

They passed, beneath the towering elms,
The market-place of Bow;
And up and down, by Wick and Town,
The winding reaches go.

To London Tower and London Wall
The rowers came at last;
Between the piles of London Bridge
On flood of tide they passed.

And all the busy London wharves
Came close before their eyes,
Crowded with boats of watermen,
And fleets of merchandise.

The Friesland and the Flemish folk,
And ships with Gascon wine,
And they who bring the costly fruits
From markets Byzantine;
And fishing-boats at Billingsgate,
Smelling of tar and brine.

They glided past the City Bars,
Where, on the King's right hand,
With gleams of fading primroses
Sloped down the flowery Strand;

And on his left the trackless marsh
Lay low and green and fair,
Out to the blue horizon hills,
With haunts of hiding there.

Oh, sweet, sweet, sweet the willow-wrens
In rustling reeds do sing;
And clear, clear, clear the larks in heaven
Ring out to greet the King.

Oh, low, low, low the wood-pigeons
Coo from the branches high;
And loud, loud, loud the nightingales
From budding brakes reply.

And now at last, the whitethorn lights
Of Thorney Isle appear,
A mound of snow, above, below,
And in the water clear.

And as unto the bank they came,
They saw a sign most strange;
The sailing down of all the swans,
As far as sight could range.

Their white wings waved all round the isle,
Like white sea-foam alive,
A circling reef; and streaming down,
Still other swans arrive.

Then marvelled much the King thereat,
And troubled was his face;
'So many swans I never saw,
All gathered in one place.'

King Edward tracked the woodland maze,
The holy Hermit's screen;
But open was the middle space,
And there the grass grew green,
And blue the hyacinths, where once
St. Peter's Church had been.

The Hermit sat outside his cell,
In life's last borderlands;
Full lowly knelt the holy King
Beneath his trembling hands.

The Hermit woke as from a dream:
'King Edward, art thou come?
Then praised be God! My time is short,
To-night I shall be dumb.

Send back thy rowers for a priest;
And this one hour be mine.
Yea, Peter's self it was stood here:—
Last night he brought the sign.

Four hundred years and more have flown,
Since to this spot he came,
And his own church did consecrate
By heavenly midnight flame.

The heathen have not left a trace
Of holy feet that trod;
These choristers of May alone
Do warble praise of God.

It is to thee, O crownèd King,
God gives another crown;
Here is to be thy monument,
The shrine of thy renown.

God grants thee, Edward, twenty years,
Till all shall be fulfilled;
Glorious shall be the House of God
Which here thou shalt rebuild;

For palace and for sanctuary,
For London's watch and ward;
For honour of great Peter,
With Paul her gates to guard.

This thy great Minster of the West
Grows in its place, O King;
Like dreams it seems of carvèd gleams
Of angels' fashioning;
The height, the depth, the mystery
Of heaven's imagining.

And here within the wondrous walls,
Kings shall be born, and die;
And thou, O Edward, in the midst
In thy last peace shalt lie.

The kings in proud procession pass
For crowning of thy race;
Solemn and slow with chants they go
Unto their burial-place.

Years—generations—centuries—
I see the Altar blaze;
And day and night to God's great throne
Ascendeth prayer and praise:
Yet one thing lacketh, only one;
Sleep then the Saints always?

I see the See of Canterbury
Is set for rise and fall;
Many and great her Saints shall be,
Yet shall she lose her Pall.'

. . . .

His voice dropped down;—a sudden gloom
The earth and sky o'erran;
And the King trembled on his knees
Beside the Holy Man;
And long he feared;—till faint and far,
Once more his speech began.

'I see,' he said, 'a place of tombs;
In darkness there they lie;
No single altar lamp illumes
The empty Sanctuary.

Thou sleepest, Edward, in the midst,
And angels watch beside;
But all around, from underground,
Pale ghosts at midnight glide.

They fill, in dim and whispering crowds,
Thy Minster of the West;
No prayers are said or sung for them,
Their souls can find no rest.

Through all the awful avenues
They wander in their woe;
The Cross is gone,—the holy hours
No holy vigils know.

All the vast darkness heaves with sighs;
Yet at the farthest end
A streak of brightness seems to show
The door to which I wend:

A golden beam that spreads and shines,
And all entranceth me;—
A form of white, a face of light,
Of loveliest majesty.

Is it the Holy Father's face,
That blesseth all the earth?
A pilgrimage to Rome for this
Were well a lifetime worth.

Is it the blessèd Evangelist
Who lay on Jesus's breast?
Hath he then tarried all this time,
And come into the West?

He is so old, he is so frail,
I cannot tell if he
Be still on earth, or hath stepped down
From heaven's high company.

A mitre is upon his head,
A ring is on his hand;—

And such a face I have not seen;
Nor did I understand
Till now, how the Apostles looked
And spoke, in Holy Land.

Yet is thy great West Minster
Against him closed and barred;
Meseemeth that he stands outside,
And over it keeps guard.

Oh, he is come, the Shepherd comes
To feed the flock once more!
And greater grace hath Westminster
Than that she lost before.

She hath her Prince, she hath her Saint,
The Father sits at home:
Oh, happy are the eyes that see
Those days long hence to come!

Rest, rest, poor ghosts! He watches now,
With holy hands of prayer.
Sink down, O City, into sleep!
He has you in his care.

Edward, a greater one than thou
Shall make his home with thee:—
O sweetest Saint of England's sons,
Whose smile far-off I see,
In thy pure prayers for all poor souls,
Remember even me!'

THE SILVER JUBILEE

CHURCH OF ST. PETER AND ST. EDWARD

JUNE 8TH, 1890

SILVER light of lilies, broad white light of noon,
Low twinkling lights beneath the altar, whispering clear,
'We are here, we are alive, we, too, this day in June,
Salute you ere you come to us, O true and dear!'

Oh, we are proud, we are proud to-day, because we have some part
In our Cardinal,—Father, and Prince of us, and more;
Because of the stateliest head, because of the greatest heart,
In all the English realm, that is ours to bow before.

Who is the First in this city? You only have to look:—
The First by seal Divine will be First of citizens too;
For a King it were great grace to hand him his open book;—
God's law and man's law,—but hearts know their own way through.

It is the sin of the world the noble head that bows,
The sorrow of all the world that in the eyes lies deep,
The care of the world that furrows the agèd vigilant brows,
And the Shepherd of all these souls in the evening may not sleep.

But oh! to-day we ask for the joy that is the crown,
We dare to plead the patience of all these sacred years:
In Thy own measureless mercy, Thyself, O Lord, pour down
The blessings that his poor send up in prayers and tears!

The air is all alive with desire of all men's eyes;—
Now comes the gleaming crimson as he passes by!
But suddenly the passionate pride within us dies,
Struck down beneath the awe of a great humility.

He is kneeling in the midst, the meekest and most old,
And silent in the silence of hearts that break for love;
We give Thee thanks, O God, that we this day behold;
And the shadow brooding overhead is of the Holy Dove.

Lord, Thou art here, he looks on Thee,—he speaks to us;
O precious day and precious hour of love and awe!
This to keep for days to come,—the voice that thrilled us thus,
And the tender heavenly face illuminate that we saw.

The Sacred Heart, the Sacred Name,—he speaks the word:
Enough,—we have seen his face, no more for tears we see;
No need for Thee to ask, to-day and here, dear Lord,
'Lovest thou Me?' There is no doubt betwixt Thy Saint and Thee.

THE RETURN OF SPRING

LENT, 1892

THE nightingales have come: I heard them talking,
Last evening to each other loud and late;
Early this morning in my garden walking,
The daffodil was golden at the gate.

O nightingales, what tidings do you bring
From a far land? Your speech is not as ours;
You know perchance this secret of the spring,
For which I languish through the lonely hours.

Perhaps it is not from a far-off land,—
But very near, and with an open door;
If I your language could but understand,
I too might find the way, and grieve no more.

Ye know! ye know! for all the air is ringing
With your sweet story in an unknown tongue;
And that mysterious message, ye are bringing
From the world's soul, in sorrow is not sung.

O creatures of the air, allied more nearly
To wingèd spirits, and to souls made free,
Ye, sharing of their life, may see more clearly
What ye would utter in your minstrelsy.

O violets, that are crowding one another,
Blue, from the earth where you have lain asleep!
What heard you in the bosom of our mother?
What of our treasure she was given to keep?

Pink on the bough the almond buds are breaking,
Deep-drawn the sap to sky and air unfurled.
What can they tell? For news our hearts are aching
Out of the upper and the under world.

The buds, the birds, the West winds are returning:
Whence come they? They have no interpreter.—
What has this spring for us but tears and mourning?
What answer can our hearts put forth to her?

The time is Lent—no fast we need be keeping;
Beneath God's heavy hand we moan apart;
Bitter our bread, our eyes are blind with weeping;
The hand is gone that bound the broken heart.

But O my Father, do we grudge thy guerdon?
Thou who wast patient with us for so long;
Didst thou not say, 'I have laid down my burden?'
We could not do thee in our hearts this wrong.

They keep the feast, they keep the feast in Heaven!
The Blessèd in their mansions are more blest;
What is the song of Saints, the welcome given
To him who comes to be their wedding guest?

Each one salutes thee, on the way thou farest,
By thine own name, thy name that is to be;
I may not call thee by the name thou bearest,
By my obedience this was laid on me.

I saw thee once, once only, kneel in praying
Before the altar unto Christ thy Lord;
I heard thee name His name, once only, staying
To raise thy hand in reverence at the word.

I heard and saw, I saw no more, the raining
Of sudden awestruck tears obscured my sight;
But ever since the vision is remaining
Of that transfigured face of love and light.

But oh! what dare we dream of that embracing,
When Jesus, Father of the World to come,
Himself receives thee in His arms, and facing
His unveiled presence thou art kneeling dumb?

Surely His bliss ineffable is burning
Brighter, even His, because in Heaven thou art;
Has He not waited for thee, even with yearning
Like thine, O Servant of the Sacred Heart!

. . . . .

I know not how it is—I see thee pass
In a green land of spring that is not ours;
Still waters flow amid the even grass,
Thy white robe brushes the narcissus flowers;

Blue hills of Heaven the far horizon gird,
And all is clear; the trees upon the plain
Are almond trees full-blossomed; and unheard,
Unheeded, falls on thee a rosy rain.

And other trees are white, all white, above thee,
Like cherry trees against the blue sky there;
Oh! could we wish thee with us, we who love thee,
Remembering thy palace gaunt and bare?

The sheep are feeding in the level pastures,
They lift their heads, and stand, and follow thee;
Thou seest them not, thine eyes are to thy Master's,
And to the vision of Eternity.

It was the glory of the sunset lightened
The heavenly, heavenward face which here we saw;
Now in the East the morning skies are whitened,
To which thou turnest with a rapturous awe.

One hastens towards thee with an eager greeting,
An angel face that once upon me smiled;
Smiled at my knee—oh! could I see your meeting,
My lost, my best, my Father and my Child!

So old, so young—they were the fairest faces
I ever saw, or ever here shall see:—
The same turf covers them in distant places;
Where'er they are, God grant that I may be!

THE BRIDEGROOM'S VOICE

My suffering, My long-suffering ones,
My dearest ones of all,
You lie and listen in your pain,
To hear your Lover's call.
The joyous ones, the careless ones,
Have in My love a part;
And all of them are dear, but you
Are nearest to My Heart.

My hidden ones, My hidden ones,
Down in the dull back street,
Laid low in the sick-chamber's gloom,
I know each dark retreat,
And dreary is the dismal day,
And long the weary night;
But to My eyes your blessèd souls
Like tapers shine alight.

My slowly, sadly sinking ones,
Not beautiful you are;
With livid cheeks and twisted limbs,
And loathsome wound and scar.
Men turn their eyes away from you,
And from your breath they flee:
Your Bridegroom comes to clasp you close;
Fear not—for I am He.

My little ones, My little ones,
To Me you are so fair:
The great, the glad ones pass Me by,
But you I cannot spare.
Companions of that solitude
Where breaks the Heart Divine,
Suffer with Me, and stay with Me,
For you are only Mine.

My patient, My forgotten ones,
Your poor, pale lips entreat;
But who desires you? Who would die
One smile of yours to meet?
I journeyed far, a fight to death
I fought for you, alone:
I sold Myself to slavery,
To win you for My own.

My lonely, My forsaken ones,
To you My steps return;
I pine for longing of your looks,
And for your lips I yearn.
I seize your hands, I hold them fast,
I cannot let you go;
I keep you in the secret place,
Which only you may know.

My beaten-down, My vanquished ones,
Your fainting murmurs reach
And wring My Heart, the Heart of God,
Past all the heavenly speech:

My Heart is torn, My open Heart,
My tears stream down anew;
My own hand trembles on the cup
I measure out for you.

My feeble ones, My fettered ones,
Who from Me cannot fly,
Who drink of the same cup with Me,
And in My bosom lie:—
I kiss your hands, your piteous hands,
I kiss your helpless feet;
I would that I could be to you
As you to Me are sweet.

My thrown aside, My broken ones,
My precious ones unprized;
Comfort Me, take Me to your heart,
Who am like you despised!
Mantled in scorn, obscure, concealed,
I fold you in My arms;
Only the Bridegroom lifts the veil,
Too jealous of your charms.

I count the throbbings of your pulse,
I gather up your sighs,
All your complaining in the book
Of My remembrance lies:
Your names are graven on My hands,
Yea, pierced and graven deep;
The eyes that guard your sleepless hours
Slumber not, neither sleep.

I watch the minutes sorrowful,—
You think that I forget!
I hold the pillows on My arms
On which your cheeks are wet.
O Holy Hours! whose pricelessness
So few have learned even yet:—
More friends have I on Calvary
Than upon Olivet.

For on My right hand and My left,
Two thieves are crucified;
And many stand afar and near,
And two are at My side.
But shuddering, from Gethsemane
All others turn and flee;
And through the midnight mystery still
Ye only watch with Me.

Some give me gold, yea all their store,
Some give Me prayer and praise;
Some give Me hearts of innocence,
Some give me all their days.
But none give back the bitter price
I paid their love to win,
Save you, My lambs of sacrifice,
Whose moans I hear within.

But you, My darlings, shut and sealed
Within the Nuptial House,
You wear My chain about your necks,
My crown upon your brows.

O chosen souls! in all the world
Whom I have found most sweet,
Can you forgive the Cross of Christ,
Where love and anguish meet?

Yea, many think they love Me well,
To whom life is not loss;
They gaze up to the opened heaven,
But have passed by the Cross.
They too to Paradise shall come:—
But ere its white shores gleam,
They yet may find the Bridegroom's bower
Is other than they deem.

For one with tears will kiss My feet,
And one My garment's hem,
And one to Thabor walks with Me,
One to Jerusalem.
And some will watch all night with Me
Out on the mountains wide:
But you lie down upon My bed,
And stir not from My side.

But oh! My tender ones, My bed
Is hard and rough for you;
And spread with thorns, as thick as once
In Eden roses blew;
And strait and strong is my embrace,
And all your early bloom
Withers in mute surrendering,
As altar flames consume.

'Twas I betrothed you to Myself,
And Me you did not choose;
But though you were by force espoused,
Will you consent refuse?
Oh! awful is the throne to share,
And deep the cup to drink:
But am I nought to you at all,
That you should only shrink?

Lift up your face, and look at Me!
Alas, you do not dare:
Not yet your eyes may meet My own,
Their light you cannot bear.
Your face is hidden in your locks,—
Your face upon My breast;—
And in the wedding-robe of queens
Your loveliness is drest.

Will you then leave Me, will you part?
Is it too hard to bide?
Have you not one word left for Me,
Who listen by your side?
Is it My own right hand alone,
That wins and holds you fast?
Or will your own hearts cast out fear,
And give yourselves at last?

Earth's riches are too poor for you;
Instead, I give you Mine:
I bring you gifts from Holy Land,
Spikenard, and myrrh, and wine.

Command My Kingdom, ask of Me!
Nought can My love refuse;
Except to loose you from My arms:—
And that you may not choose.

Oh! in My treasuries your tears
Are pearls and precious stones;
And stars are quickened in the space
That trembles with your moans;
And gold-embossed the needlework
Of wound and sore and stain:
And ivory and cedar-built
Your crumbling house of pain.

Oh! this is not the singing-time
Of birds, when I shall say,
As morning breaks,—'Arise, My love,
My fair one, come away!'
This is the winter and the night:—
The night is long and cold;
With only fire of love at heart,
To keep on life a hold.

O white espousèd souls of Mine!
Your crowning hour I wait;
When you and I shall rest at last,
Inside My palace-gate.
The joyous angels guard each side
The path they never trod;
For they are but your servitors,
And you the brides of God.

THE BRIDE RELUCTANT

'LEAVE the romance before the end;
Leave the late roses to their fall;
Dismiss the nurselings thou dost tend;
I hear another, closer call.
'Tis I, thy Guardian, give thee word,
Thy Bridegroom seeketh thee, O sweet!
Thy Bridegroom comes,—His step I heard—
Within thy chamber thee to meet.'

'Another day, another time!
'Tis pleasant in the outer room;
I love the airy summer clime,
And not the inner chamber's gloom.
And this year's roses will not come
Again; but betwixt us the bond
Is fixed, and fast, and wearisome;
For one is fickle, one is fond.'

'Come to thy chamber, for He stands
Tearful, and seeking only thee;
With ravished eyes, and outstretched hands,
And he commands resistlessly.
Come to thy chamber, though it be
Narrow, and dark, and full of pain;
He paid a heavy price for thee,
And can He let thee go again?'

'My Bridegroom's bed is cold and hard,
My Bridegroom's kiss is ice and fire,
My Bridegroom's clasp is iron-barred,
I am consumed in His desire:
My Bridegroom's touch is as a sword
That pierces every nerve and limb;
"Depart from me," I moan, "O Lord!"
All the night long I spend with Him.'

'Oh! heart of woman holdeth not
The passion of His love for thee;
He sees thee perfect, without spot,
Crowned with celestial jewelry.
The doors of Heaven could not hold
His feet from hasting to thy side;
The ardours of the Suns are cold
To His for thee, His hard-won bride.'

'Rather am I His bondmaiden,
Compelled by law and not by love.
Oh, would I were enfranchised; then,
With wings of silver, like a dove—
Then would I flee, past heaven's far bound,
The unendurable embrace;
Then would I hide in earth's profound
From the strange terror of His Face!'

'Enter, to keep thy Bridegroom's tryst!
Liking or loth I thee have led:
He is thine own, albeit He wist
That thy half-hearted love was dead.

What though His Bride with Him must share
A couch of thorns without repose?
Thousands this moment death would dare
To know one word of all she knows.'

'I pine, on haunted hills to muse,
To face the open sunrise skies;
I pine for friends that I might choose;
I pine for little children's eyes;
For free and fearless limbs—to move
Breasting the wave, breasting the breeze:
But jealous love is cruel love,
And He denies me all of these.'

'Child, take thy roses, take thy toys,
Take back thy life and liberty;
Thy days shall flow in simple joys,
And undisturbed thy nights shall be.
Thy Bridegroom does thee no more wrong,
Poor child, the victim of His Heart:
Look but on Him once more,—one long
Last look, and then from Him depart!'

'Farewell—one look. But oh! this lone
Bare desert, where I might be free!
Thy Face I see—Thy Face, my own,
And nought in heaven or earth but Thee!
But O my Lord, my Life, my Love,
Thou knowest all my weakness best;
Take back into the ark Thy dove,
And comfort me upon Thy breast!'

ST. ALBAN'S BURIAL-GROUND

THE swallows and white butterflies
Fly low down Guildford Street;
The wandering harpers at the door
Make music sounding sweet:
The golden sun of August shines
Above the yellow wheat.

The purple levels of the heath
Stretch wide to the Unknown;
The delicate sundew droops between,
In islets each alone;
The sweetness of the silent air
From fairyland is blown.

The garden of the dead lies smooth,
In vistas long and green,
The fir-trees sweep the sunny turf,
With the low graves between;
Lawn after lawn runs opening out,
And still no end is seen.

They lie around their Calvary,
All sleeping in the sun,

The faithful, the emancipate,
Whose sabbath has begun,
Far from the dark and narrow ways,
In which their rest was won.

The thyme lies lowly at their feet,
In measureless perfume,
The bees are humming all around
Amid the heather bloom,
The blue-winged moths hang motionless
Upon the quiet tomb.

Do they remember the long days
Of want and care's increase;
The noisy days, the crowded nights,
The toil that did not cease?
Did there come to them through the din
The vision of this peace?

The simple, and the penitent,
The broken-down, the young,
Together in their pilgrimage
Have they not prayed and sung?
They gather here once more at last,
To rest their own among.

Oh, well for them that they have here
A resting-place so sweet!
A waft of rose and rosemary
Steals through the sultry street;
One sleeps, one watches—both of them
In this last home shall meet.

The lambs are born upon the hills,
Amid the winter snow;
The babes are born in London streets,
Where fire and lights burn low;
They come with crying and with tears,
But they are glad to go.

They have a happy playing-place,
Where they may laugh and run,
Their angels hold them by the hand,
Soft-singing every one,
They dance upon a sward like this
Beneath a summer sun.

Eastward God keeps a garden,
The winged souls fly there:
There is no weight of heaviness
Through all the limpid air;
They have forgotten like a dream
This load of flesh we bear.

The sunrise shows the gates of it,
That open always stay;
You look towards it at the Creed,
It is not far away;
Dying at noon you may arrive
Before the fall of day.

Have we not been there—who can tell—
In sleep, when souls walk free?
O land that lies beyond the veil,
What did we hear and see?
Some shadow in the noonday floats
Of long-lost memory.

It must be near, for when the soul
  Has crossed the parting stream,
A touch, a whisper brings it back
  Into this earthly dream,
And we forget the things that are,
  Lost in the things that seem.

But they will pass the waves no more,
  They will not wake again;
In fields of lilies far away
  The languid limbs have lain;
Amid the palms of Paradise
  Doth their long rest remain.

ST. BARNABAS

AMIDST these freer, fuller days
  Of wealth, and wanderings unconfined,
Doth still through the familiar ways
  The Via Dolorosa wind;
Beneath their burden faint and bowed,
Its victims pass among the crowd.

And ofttimes, 'mid the London streets,
  A face that they have seen before
Their weary, dumb appealing meets,
  Compassionate, consolator;
The years have made it dear and known,
Yet named but in an undertone.

He hears them suffer and complain,
  They agonise—he fails them not;
The workers in the fields of pain
  He strengthens in their daily lot;
Pale hands are stretched in feeble prayer,
Even till death his help is there.

And yet these things are hard to speak,
  Nor can the tale of them be told;

For pain is secret, and its cheek
Shrinks even as shame's from sight or hold:
And he who enters at that door
Is dumb thereof for evermore.

And secret is the burden borne
By him who is their minister;
For hope that comes to souls forlorn,
And comfort to the sufferer,
Steps joyously,—nor do we trace
The lines of sorrow on the face.

With no ascetic outward mien,
Wayfarer where the saints have fared;—
But sunshine of a smile serene,
And simple pleasures freely shared;
And all the thorn and Cross alone
To God and to the angels known.

By life renounced, by gifts laid down,
By unacknowledged sacrifice,
Is woven year by year the crown
Perceived more plainly than its price;
The Master's form is scarcely dim,
So close its shadow falls on him.

The daily offered prayer at dawn,
In dimness of the sanctuary,
The altar in the heart withdrawn,
Through days of arduous ministry:—
And all the rest unsaid must be,
Self-sealed into obscurity.

A life that doth itself divest
  Of self, that guards its heavenly height
As closely as the wren her nest,
  Nor lets its left hand know its right,—
An ill requital, and a wrong,
It were to spoil it with a song.

Bearing thy brethren's Cross along,
  Angel of darkest days and hours,
Thy heart must patient be and strong,
  Upheld by the celestial powers;
And yet not wholly satisfied,—
Hiding desire it cannot hide:

The irrepressible desire
  Of love, to love itself to be
Conformed and fastened, even by fire;—
  Yet in entire humility
Letting no sigh escape, but still
Waiting each hour His Holy Will.

Thou hear'st the wind blow where it lists,
  From what world's end thou canst not tell;
The Breath of God which nought resists
  Wafts the unspoken word as well:
'Saint Barnabas' is whispered low;—
The sufferers and their servants know.

MISERICORDIA

WRITTEN FOR THE GUILD OF ST. BARNABAS FOR NURSES

THE birds spake one to another;
  But all their speech was sung;—
Speech understood in Eden;
  They have not lost its tongue,
And keep the kingdom of the air
  As when the earth was young.

Each bird did utter its sweet note
  Unto its mate alone;
And one did speak and one reply,
  Of those whom they had known;
The nested branches thrilled with low
  Love-language of their own.

The cuckoo calls,—'I have come back,
  The spring comes back with me,
O meadow, bright with fairy flight
  Of children sweet to see,
And little hands with cuckoo flowers
  Filled, as it used to be!'

'I see a field, a field of flowers,
An empty field, alas!
The daisies and the clovers bloom,
And the dark vernal-grass;
But never do the lovely heads,
And little footsteps pass.'

The blackbird singeth all the year,
Summer and winter through;
When others seek a golden air,
His heart to home is true;
And tender fall his notes, as fall
From heaven the drops of dew.

'O lovely, growing girls and boys,
In the green garden ways!
So wild and innocent, and one
With far-off angel gaze,
Taller and fairer than the rest,
Heart of the heavenly days.'

'A place is in the Chapel shown
Where once he used to sit;
The boys of England still are there,
His name is over it;
A Cross is in the Churchyard green,
And there his name is writ.'

O speak, and answer, nightingale!
Nightingale passionate,
Through shortest nights of all the year
That singest loud and late,
And now with sorrow quivering,
And now with joy elate.

'Oh, summer hours on summer lawns,
A radiant group they played,
And rested merrily, and laughed,
Beneath the oak-tree's shade;
Into the morning-tide of life
Had entered man and maid.'

'Farewell! as forth from fatherland,
One to long exile goes:
What is his quest? Where labours he?
Or where does he repose?
How should we know? By Red Sea sands
The red flamingo knows.'

The wood-pigeon upon her nest
With her two nestlings sate;
Secure within her bower of green,
She heard her grey-winged mate;
And yet her voice, the ring-dove's voice,
Moaned as if desolate.

'Where are the young brides beautiful,
And bridegrooms, gone away?
I heard the peal of wedding bells,
And all the world was gay;
With waving hands, and cheering crowds,
They went, and bright array.'

'I saw the bride upon her bed,
Still, still, by candle-light;
Her hands were folded on her breast
Above her robe of white;
It was the very robe she wore
Upon her marriage-night.'

It matters not about the old—
  It is the young who die;
They fall like field-flowers on the field
  When mowing men come nigh;
So straight, and tall, and beautiful,
  Then low at once they lie.

The great crows sweep across the lawn,
  Black in the sunshine's glare;
Their nest is in the elm-tree's top,
  And boys will climb and dare
To take their brood, but none of them
  Have ever reached it there.

'Where is our youth, or noblest born?
  Whom the great troopship bore
Out of our sight—he, all of them,
  Glorious, though hearts were sore;
Our wings o'ershadow since that day
  Some who have smiled no more.'

'Upon a dusty battle-field
  Gather the birds of prey;
But war-worn soldiers underground
  Hide the young face away;
And what besides is hidden there,
  I see, but do not say.'

Then low and faint, as if a breath
  From far dominions stirred,
Yet whispering near and all around,
  Were other voices heard,
In that same speech of Paradise
  Used of the singing-bird.

'Oh, soft, soft, soft, those shining wings
That carried us, outspread!
And cool as lilies for the limbs
That burned on yonder bed;
But yet for very feebleness
Some words we left unsaid.

'We speak them now, lest we forget,
In our release at first,
Those sisters of our suffering,
Who tended us and nursed;
Who were our guardians and our friends,
When we were at the worst.

'In all our pain and helplessness
To us they ministered;
They worked through hideous night and day
With helpful deed and word;
They ceased not from their comforting,
Although no thanks they heard.

'Soft were their hands that tended us
Gently, the last of all;
Soft were their hearts, they wept as they
Dressed us for burial;
For we were near, we heard and saw
The tears that they let fall.

'We ask it for our youth foregone,
And for our dying woe:—
We did not falter from our cross,
O Lord, as Thou dost know,
We died in our appointed place,
When Thou wouldst have it so:—

'We ask Thee this for recompense,
And Thou wilt not refuse,—
Give back to them that charity
Which they to us did use:
Let these our nurses have from Thee
The best that Thou canst choose.

'Misericordia! for the world
Is misery at the best;
And miserable most who lie
All day, yet cannot rest;
Whose hidden nights of agony
By none but these are guessed.

'Oh, strengthen them in service now!
And when they come to die,
Oh, soft for our sakes make the bed
In heaven whereon they lie;
And as they did to us below,
Be done to them on high!'

ELDER-FLOWER

This is the time of the Elder-flower,
The Elder that comes before the Rose;
The world is all one Elder bower
To him who sees and him who knows;
Through England you may walk to-day,
But the Elder-flower is all the way.

The nights are white, the North is white;
Although the hawthorn and May moon
Have passed, there is another light
Broad over all the earth in June;
Not perfect-sweet, nor perfect-fair,
Yet full of fragrance on the air.

The Elder everywhere is queen
In the tall flowering of the grass;
O'er ragged corners dark and mean
A sudden glory now doth pass;
Each cottage shed and yard to-day
In homely white and green is gay.

When the first wave of long green grass
Before the mower's scythe sweeps down,

When the first rose's petals pass
In showers, the year has lost her crown,
The glory of her youth is done,
The earth has turned her from the sun.

But now there is no pause at all
Betwixt enchanted day and day,
At midnight wakes the cuckoo's call,
The grasses sleep not on the way,
And when the Elder overflows,
All hours are ripening to the Rose.

Oh, my boy and my girl so sweet!
Brother and sister, hand in hand,
Swifter than roes with bounding feet,—
Blue were the skies above the land,
When those twin faces shone together;
Then it was always summer weather.

They climbed in the branches, they made their nest,
They hid in the haze of Elder-flowers,
In the long days,—all days were best,—
The swallows skimmed through the golden hours;
'This is my secret! come and see;
Here is my house in the Elder-tree.'

A rustling in the boughs was heard,
And through thick leaves a sunny head
Peeped out, and happy whispers stirred,
Till hushed by some intrusive tread;
And the old tree shook with a silver shower
Of laughter out of the Elder-flower.

And then in the Elder-berry time,
  What gladness of gathering, to and fro!
One for the topmost bunch to climb,
  One with the basket heaped below;
The autumn brought them treasure and glee
In the purple fruit of the Elder-tree.

The making of Elder-berry wine!
  What busy feet went up and down!
The secret store, the deep design,
  The hands and faces stained and brown;
No one else might share or see
The progress of their industry.

The old dark cellar was full of joy,—
  Young voices over the crimson wine:
What was the triumph of girl and boy!
  No one thought it would be so fine.
When the ground was hard and the stars were bright,
They ran down the road on Christmas night.

They knocked, they opened the poor man's door,
  ('And blessings be on your darling head!')
'We have brought you some of our wine for store,
  To make you merry and warm,' they said;
Their loving eyes in the fire-light shone,
And the place was gladder they looked upon.

Yes, June is here with all her leaves,
  And the birds still fly by two and two;
But the Elder-tree in the garden grieves,
  'My bright-faced children, where are you?
Who nestles now in my flowery foam,
Close by the doorways of your home?

One passes, nor looks up at me :—
  Are these my eyes of dancing blue ?
But where is the one I used to see,
  With waving hair, that walked with you ?
Nine years I watched him grow in grace,
Two years I have missed him from his place ;
Where is the boy with the angel's face ?'

THE FIELDS OF LAVENDER

THE fields, the fields of lavender!
  Beneath the deep-blue August sky,
Before the startled wayfarer,
  Spread up and down in waves they lie;
So unexpected, so unknown,
They seem a secret of their own.

You come upon a sheeted sea
  Of one rich amethystine hue,
Spread out before you suddenly,
  Far as the dazzled eye can view;
Hid in a hollow of the land,
A purple hollow vast and grand.

Purple and purple, such a shade
  As was not dreamed that earth could show;
The light and ruffling breezes made
  The purple shadow deep below:
Down in the valley, up the hill,
One soft unbroken purple still.

With white wings fluttering to and fro,
  White wings of countless butterflies,

That like minute cloud-shadows go
  Over the rustling field, that lies
As a strange world revealed to sight,
Where the freed souls have taken flight.

The lovely, loving eyes rejoice,
  Gazing in rapture and surprise;
The glad and innocent young voice
  Of boyhood, at my side, replies,
With worshipping, delighted awe,
'In all my life I never saw

Nor knew there could be anything
  So beautiful!'—O child! thine eyes
Have known, since that look lingering,
  The endless fields of Paradise.
Yet keep through all the starry shine,
That hour which once was ours and thine!

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S JOURNEY

A SCORCHING Midsummer,—the parched-up land
Waits thirstily beneath the burning sky,
Burnished, without a cloud, day after day.
All the day long no living thing dares stir
For sultriness:—but now in the hot dusk
We take our way abroad. The air is full
Of fluttering moths, that brush against our hair
Silent and startling,—then the road winds on
Past cottage doors, in the red afterglow,
Each with its row of glittering lilies tall,
Solemn and bridal-white in multitudes,
The flowers of death:—then upwards to the height
Whence the whole ringed horizon shows the plain
Sweltering, and still alight beneath a dome
Of fading blue, that nearer to the earth
Smokes in a dull and angry haze of heat.
And all along the verge there runs a ridge
Of wooded heights, and in their midst a Tower:—
The topmost Tower of England in the South,
The Tower of Winds and Angels unto me,
Which once I climbed to, clinging to thy arm:
When suddenly the whole Atlantic burst
In one resistless sweep of rushing air,
And back I turned, unable to withstand.
But thou, my Angel, whom the Winds of Heaven

Hurt not, being soon to mingle amongst them,
Didst linger to take pleasure in their play.

Then downward turns the road, and we alight,
And pass into the forest's open glades,
A floor, a roof, a wall of deepest green.
Down, down we plunge, till the descent has found
A dell of foxgloves—foxgloves everywhere
In ranks luxuriant, higher than our heads,
All their full bells untouched and magical,
The lost and ancient music of the earth,
Chiming unheard the dirges of the young:—
As with the foxglove dies the youth of the year,
And to its burial crowds the white wild rose.—
A purple hiding-place in fairyland,
Where we walk buried, and the deep moss grows
Cool to our feet from moisture underground;
For we have come near to the streamlet's bed,
Now empty in the torrid Midsummer.

And in the deepest hollow of the hills
That soon we reach, suddenly stretches out
The long lake of these forest solitudes,
Without a bank or pathway of approach,
The thick woods hanging to the water's edge;
A silent, melancholy lake, whose end
Is lost in distance, winding down a chain
Of lonely lakes, unseen, unvisited,
The folded heart of this low-lying cleft,
On to the dim White Water. Then the road
In sharp ascent leads to the level land,
Which secret keeps th' embowered river ravine.

Darkness is deepening: for awhile on foot
We make our way between the forest walls.

The dry heath crackles underfoot; the sand
Is hot beneath it,—over and around
The moths in crowds are flitting; all things else
Are still as death, and heavy is the heat.
Too weary is the walking, and we mount,
And lying back are swiftly borne along,
Only the breathless darkness round us now.
But whither are we going, on a road
We have not travelled, and we cannot see?
It seemeth thus, as in a waking dream
Shall be the journey's end;—that we arrive
At midnight, still in darkness, and shall find
A mansion dim and silent, and shall pass
Through open doors, until we come into
A spacious antique chamber, vaulted high,
With one great oriel window at the end,
Flooded with moonbeams, making clear the night.
And in the moonlight glimmers white a bath
Of marble inlaid in the floor, and brimmed
With water cool, and near at hand lie robes
Of white lawn, filmy as the gossamer;
And half in shadow is a table set
With piled-up strawberries, and goblets pure
Of frosted crystal, sparkling flagons filled
With water cold from subterranean springs;
And soft white beds with finest linen spread;
And sleep, cool, quiet sleep;—sweet is the sleep
We haste to in this Hostelry of Dream.

LILY

Iaybe the end is near for me to meet.
How can I let last words go forth of mine,
And not thy name be found in any line,
Iy Lily of Lilies;—yet O name most sweet,

low can I speak of thee, the heart of gold?
Of all these years in which we two have part,
Of all together we have known, O heart,
he hidden things that never may be told?

bear the precious and the secret store
Out of this world, where Mammon mocks and reigns,
Into that other world, wherein remains
he Past eternal for the Future's score.

saw, I keep it, treasure laid above,
Thy breaking smile of infantine surprise,
When first thy little brother met thine eyes,
hy bending gaze of rapture and of love.

ogether have I seen your sweet lives grow,
The nineteen years of innocent young life:—
Trouble was there, and loss, and pain, and strife,
ut you, my angels, made a heaven below.

When from thy side Death tore him without ruth,
  Thy soul passed with him into Paradise;
  And, thence returning, looked with angel eyes
On pain and woe, heroic in thy youth.

I have seen—I must be silent—night and day,
  Thy strong, unfaltering fight with agony;
  I have heard, 'twixt life and death, th' heart-rending
      cry
Of 'Lily! Lily! Lily! with me stay!'

Thy soft face, thy soft hair, thy loving hands,
  Thy cheek of roses, once upon my breast:—
  O Child, I must not, cannot speak the rest;
For who is there but I that understands?

A PORTRAIT

Feeling no want within her heart.
  Having obeyed the Bridegroom's call,
Chosen in youth the better part,
  Handmaiden of the Lord of all;
By strange, inviolate sanctity
  Engirt, as by a cloister wall.

Too virginal, too exquisite,
  For any earthbound destiny,
For man's despoiling or delight;
  Around her maiden footsteps free
Cluster and crowd the roses white
  To crown her gentle majesty.

She goes her way from morn till eve,
  Marking each hour with service sweet;
For one so fashioned of rose-leaves
  Hard service often and unmeet;
Waiting on every want that grieves
  With angel's voice, and hands, and feet.

She comes and goes, but when she comes,
  The Spring comes with her on her way;

Because that heavenly smile of hers,
  That child's smile, wakes a holy-day
Of grass, and dews, and songs of birds,
  O May flower that wast born in May!

The morning music of her voice
  Rings from a garden long ago
Transplanted, yet its bloom and scent
  The hearts of those that know her know;
And darkness turns to dawn, to hear
  Her footstep on the path below.

Bearing some cup of life's delight
  To lips most suffering and most sad;
And still, though narrow is the way,
  Moving in gladness that makes glad:
Yet always last, and least, and lowest,
  Everything given, and nothing had.

Unmarked, unpraised, and overlooked,
  Seeking and finding no reward,
Past mean, ungrateful dissonance
  The young feet still climb heavenward,
Following the face, the face she sees
  In every suffering face, her Lord.

But patience for herself she keeps,
  Her measured portion pure and plain;
Sad secret for the heart of love,
  She knows no day that is not pain;
Suffering, she loses all her life,
  And yet for love's sake counts it gain.

Yet through the uncomplaining hours
The cross is sharp, the fire is hot;
This only do the sweet lips tell,
'I pity those who suffer not;
How much they miss!' Thus faithfully,
O Child, dost thou embrace thy lot.

O eyes most sweet, whose tenderness
Is all that doth their suffering show!
The loveliest and most loving eyes
That still upon the earth I know;
Last light of love that shines for me
Ere downward to the grave I go.

The sweetbriar rose but shadows her:—
But O my white-robed angel tall,
With brows of pity bending down,
How have I merited to call
Thee mine, and even rule o'er thee,
With the most royal right of all?

But, oh, my darling, still my own,
How know we what must be our fate?
What may divide us ere the end?
Whether our rest come soon or late?
Which one shall close the other's eyes,
And which one be left desolate?

The boughs weave garlands over her,
As on she goes from tree to tree;
I hear the angels whispering,
'When will she join our company?'
Her steps are still beside my path:
I think the angels envy me.

KATHARINE DOUGLAS, *R.I.P.*

My little Star, my bright and beaming one!
Not yet—it is too soon to speak of thee;—
Yet, since already thy swift race is run,
One word, in time, withholden may not be.

For all thy days were flowers, and each had fruit
Of joyous service, and of sacred mirth;
Thy sweet face, thy sweet voice for ever mute
Have left too many desolate on earth.

Thou, dying in the most heroic act
Of life, life-giving, hast not left on earth
A barren record, but the future tract
Of time is blossomed with thy buds of birth.

Thank God for thee, then! for thy lovely span
Of springtime here, whose gladness made us glad;
And that thy higher, heavenly life began,
Ere from thy bloom one rose-leaf faded had.

But oh! my bride, my bride, my bride of June!
Thou who didst wear the roses in thy face,
Thou who didst dream white nights beneath the moon,
Thou who didst grow so lovely in this place. . . .

O DREYFUS: FROM THE CRUCIFIX[1]

RENNES, AUGUST 1899

My brother! O refuse me not the name,
Our race at least, thou knowest, is the same;
My mother was a Jewess, even as thine,
And I was born and died in Palestine.
Even now we gaze into each other's eyes
Across the crowded court—no barrier lies
Between us—thou and I, and none besides,
Hold converse; and thy tortured soul abides
Safe in the hands that will not let thee fall;
I too stood once within the Judgment Hall.
Thine eyes of martyrdom still, still they fix
Their steadfast gaze upon the Crucifix.
What do they see? Are not these answering eyes
Heavy with weeping for thine agonies?
Behold the passion of thy bleeding heart
Tears in my side the dripping wound apart;
In every limb and line dost thou not know
The reflex of thyself and all thy woe?

[1] 'At the top [of the Hall] was a stage, its front filled with a ng table, behind this seven crimson-covered seats for the judges. white Christ on a black cross, hanging on the back wall above ıe President's chair, proclaimed the place a Court of Justice.'—W. STEEVENS (*The Tragedy of Dreyfus*).

And looking down, day after day, I see
Myself once more the Crucified in thee.
Turn not away from me—hast thou not worn
With me through all these years my crown of thorn?
I am thy beggar for a look,—but thou,
O kinsman body and soul, must scorn me now!
Yet all the hosts of heaven know thee for mine;
And in the sight of all men, for my sign
Beams from thy brow in proud magnificence,
The glory of thy martyr innocence.

Thou hast stood firm in innocence, and trod
The straight way, trusting in our fathers' God;
Thou true to Him, He has been true to thee,
Or how hadst thou endured thine agony?
Yea, cast alive to devils, thou hast known
The Lord was stronger to preserve his own.
His angels camped on the infernal isle,
And kept at bay the demons of the dark,
And bore thee in their hands, that hideous while,
Into the daylight for the whole world's mark;
While the false witnesses, self-sentenced, fell,
By their own hands cast headlong into hell:
Yea, and our father David's Psalms stand true,
'Into the pit they digged they have fallen through.'
God and His angels are for thee—but thou,
Knowest thou nothing more? Remember how
When those three Children of our royal seed
Were cast into the sevenfold-heated flame,
The king himself beheld them walking freed
Amidst the furnace, and a fourth with them,
Whose form was like the Son of God? My own
O my beloved, I know—hast *thou* not known?

Through awful years that seemed without an end,
With never the voice or hand of any friend?
But I was there too, Dreyfus, I was there!
Through the vile torture of the public square
I walked beside thee—it was my voice rent
The ear with thine, crying, 'I am innocent!'
And in the stifling darkness of thy cell
My arms were round thee, till the hot tears fell
And saved thy burning brain; when night came on
I kissed thy wounded feet, my piteous one,
And bathed them with my tears; O didst thou think
Thou wast alone thy bitter cup to drink?

But when thou comest into Paradise,
Where Abraham and our forefathers dwell,
And all our holy ones of Israel,
Thou wilt look up at me and recognise
This face of mine:—How long, alas! how long
Must I endure this open shame and wrong?

I know, I know thou canst not love me yet,
Because of Judas' kiss upon me set,
By those who cry 'Lord, Lord,' and in my name
Have heaped these years of infamy and shame.
But in that day I say to them, 'Depart!
I never knew you'—thou wilt understand,
Thou who on earth my standard-bearer art,
O my Compatriot of the Holy Land!
And unresisting fall upon my heart.

SONGS OF MY LIFE

I SANG a song of the Lark,—yet not for life;
I sang a song of the Swan,—yet not for death;
I sang a song of the Bird of Paradise,
Mysterious, out of unknown groves of palm;
Yet through the open gate I have not passed.
I sang a song of the Swallow, faring forth;
And yet it was not I, but thou, my Son,
That fled thro' a night of tempests from the North
Into eternal summer and the Sun.
And yet again I sang a low sad song,
A note monotonous of loss and pain,
A song of mourning, like a Dove's, that moans,
And may not spread its wings and be at rest.
And in a desolate and moonless night
Once more I heard a voice that was my own,
'Twixt sky and earth, like souls in agony.
And now that all seems done, and life stands still,
I, erstwhile crowned with fruit and flower at once
Amid the orange grove, look to my fields
Of harvest; and behold no reapers there,
Amid the multitudinous ripe wheat;—
Must they, like barren lands, ungarnered lie?—
And scarce can tell the season of the year;
And wonder what is coming,—or is come
Already to the signal-posts of heaven,

Near, yet remote from any mortal sense,
Which opens only on this solar hour:—
This indecisive, delicate poise of the year,
Unmarked by any restless visitant;
Hollowed with sanctuaries of dormant life,
Contented in the narrow fields of home.
No month is unenchanted of the merle,
Whose world is here, who keeps his world with him,
Singing out of the heaven of his own breast:—
The most unearthly music of the year,
Down in these low dim dawns of Candlemas,
Drawn from a depth ineffable of peace.
Sweetest of all at this suspense of time,
Where night and day are one veiled borderland,
In many-shaded greys of gauzy air,
Pencilled with filmy February trees,
And luminous with glistening globes of rain.
And native also to this nameless clime
The solitary snowdrops, that appear
Ravished from out some underworld of dream;
And listening for its echoes, self-ensphered,
Vanish before the earth awakes in green.
What is the note will break the stillness next;
Is it the harsh voice of the Carrion Crow?
Or Nightingale's from under southern skies,
Singing of summer that no eye hath seen?
Or flute of Robin that portends the storm?
But whoso, in these Northern lands, they say,
Once sees the Golden Oriole on her nest,
Once hears the glorious singing of her mate,
Knows that the Spring will not return for him
On earth, and waits his certain hour in peace.

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